

RECLAIMING YOUNG ADULTS AND YOUTH: RE-ENERGIZING  
MINISTRIES FOR RETENTION AND RETURNING  
PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **RECLAIMING THE YOUNG ADULTS AND YOUTH AND RE-ENERGIZING MINISTRIES FOR RETENTION AND RETURNING PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

by

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The purpose of this project is to establish church ministries that focus on reclaiming young adults and youth that have left the church, re-energizing the interest of those who remain and retaining those who return. The methodology used to apply the project hypothesis uses a qualitative approach based on pre and post survey, a series of young adults/youth Bible study and sermon, round table discussion, and a Young Adult/ Youth Council. The results of the data analysis indicated there is a great need for new ministries for this group. This project can be applied to other churches throughout the country.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This journey in the Doctor of Ministry program has been truly a challenging experience. The completion would not have been possible without those that supported the writer in their roles as Professional and Context associates that graciously and unselfishly accepted the vision of this project and gave of their self and time; special thanks to them for dedication and contributions to the project.

This journey has also afforded the writer the opportunity to meet some of the most wonderful persons to be found any place. God has blessed the writer to be one among a wonderful peer group, *Prophetic Preaching and Praxis*. The peers refused to allow any member to become so overwhelmed that they gave up.

Special commendations and thanks is given to mentors, Doctors Robert Walker and Kenneth Cummings for their patience, understanding, constructive criticism and wisdom displayed through the entire project and to Doctor Harold Hudson; the Dean for his encouraging and motivating personality.

Special acknowledgement and thanks is given to the members of Greater Macedonia AME Church for their support, patience, and encouragement during the many absences while in Dayton, Ohio and Savannah, Georgia.

Lastly, to those persons that impact the writer's life in regard to pursuing theological education; the Right Reverend Zedekiah Lazette Grady; Retired Bishop in the AME Church and Reverend John Harold Gillison; Presiding Elder.

And to my children, parents, sibling, friends, and especially the writer's spouse,  
Trish for the love, support, and prayers that kept him focus.

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to the members of the three congregations that the writer served as Senior Pastor. Each congregation was unique in its own way and he owes them a great deal of gratitude. These members have taught the writer so very much about people and the need to develop human relational skills.

You have played a significant role in the past twenty-two years shaping the writer to recognize that his passion was getting you to unpack your hidden issues in order to bring about recognition of the need for young adults and youth ministries. Because you have been involved, a renewed emphasis will be directed toward promoting new ministries for this targeted group in the church.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
BEPM	Black Program Manager
CED	Christian Education Director
ITC	Interdenominational Theological Center
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SEPM	Special Emphasis Program Manager
TAP	Tuition Assistance Program
UTS	United Theological Seminary
YAM	Young Adult Ministries



## **INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this young adults/youth ministry model grew out of the writer's desire to identify ministries already in place but not currently utilized and develops new ministries relevant to young adults and youth in Greater Macedonia AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Currently there is a severe lack of ministries that affords the young adults and youth the opportunity to express themselves during worship service and in other areas of the church structure. This practice has contributed to the absence of this group and can no longer continue.

The current era of cable television and other technologies availability along with the opportunities for our young adults to travel extensively through their jobs and educational adventure opens up new access to different types of ministries and makes the possibility to establish young adults/youth ministries a reality. Young adults socials, Praise dancing during worship, serving on Junior Ushers board, and singing on Young adults and Youth choirs once a month are a few of the ways that the young adults and youth are allowed to engage in ministries. Yet little has been done to offer new and innovative experience to enhance worship for young adults and youth.

This project will attempt to develop a creative and workable model for ministry to serve the young adults and youth in Greater Macedonia and reach others in the faith community facing the same dilemma.

Chapter one shall define the ministry context where the proposed new young adults/youth ministries shall be implemented. The context for this project will be at 48 Alexander Street, Greater Macedonia AME Church Charleston, South Carolina.

Here, the reader will be introduced to the logic for this project and the reasoning why reclaiming and re-energizing young adults and youth ministries are significant to the survival to the future of the church. It will also identify the passion this writer possesses because of his own spiritual journey and the life of his context as the foundation of providing vibrant and necessary ministry.

Chapter Two reviews the field of new ministries established, renewed excitement realized and retention process provided. In this chapter, the reader will be exposed to scholars and practitioners who have emerged over time as experts in examining groundbreaking and inventive ways of making new ministries relevant to the context. This chapter will reveal the up and down side of neglecting the importance of providing new ministries.

Chapter Three directs the reader to contend with the critical foundations that support this project. The biblical foundations will direct the reader to a position where they can see where the scripture validates God calling leaders at a young age, the importance of recognizing and accepting young adults/youth involvement in areas of leadership, and how many of the young leaders were mentored by older and experienced people to ensure a smooth transition. The theological foundation will focus on what the scholars and theologians expressed in the area of young adults and youth leadership and the mentoring practices that came a part of the process.

The theoretical foundation will reveal to the reader the applied steps included to reclaim and re-energize the young adults and youth in order to retain them that return. The historical foundations will give a summation of how the Christian church has arrived over time.

Chapter Four exposes the reader to the methodology used in the project. This chapter charts how information is processed through the utilization of pre and posttest, Bible studies, and special sermons that will be develop and applied to acquire and accumulate necessary statistics to uncover reliable data. This chapter will also chart how through this detail process new young adults/youth ministries surfaces.

Chapter Five is the field experience portion. It reveals the results based on implementation of the project. This chapter covers the pros and cons involved when attempting to execute new young adults/youth ministries.

Chapter Six comprises the writer's reflections, summary, and concluding remarks. The reader is able to recognize the writer's reflections concerning the design of the project, determine the project's progression, and the project's strengths and weaknesses, if there is any modification needed, and how this project can be beneficial to other settings. The writer expects this project to be a model by which other churches, regardless of denomination, can be used as a means to measure the effectiveness of the churches young adults and youth ministries. Additionally, the writer visualizes this project in the future to be an ideal process for establishing new young adults and youth ministries in places where there is none in existence and as a means of fashioning advancements to those where those ministries are not operational in their context.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

#### **Spiritual Autobiography: The First Years**

The writer, Reverend Lawrence Eugene Gordon was the third born in a family of nine children. The first six children including the writer were born to Robert Irving Gordon and Ruthie Mae Gordon. The three youngest siblings of the writer were born to Thomas Johnson and Ruthie Mae Johnson. The writer, his mother and the other five siblings moved from the city of Charleston, South Carolina to the rural community of Johns Island, South Carolina in April of 1960. The move was necessitated because of the writer's parent's separation that eventually resulted in them getting divorce. The writer, his mother and siblings lived with his great-grandmother the person that helped shaped his spiritual life.

The writer's father, Robert Irving Gordon died two days after his fortieth birthday. As a youth and young adult, the writer experienced firsthand being impoverished. The family struggled to make ends meet and compensated by everyone that was capable of working to contributing to the family's support. The writer and his two older siblings were required to work on the farm during the summer months and sometimes in the winter and spring during planting and harvesting seasons to earn money to subsidize the lack of funds in the writer's home. He learned many lessons about survival and responsibility while working in the heat of the summer and the cold of the

winter. Oftentimes, while the other children in the community were playing, the writer and his siblings were unable to play with them because they were required to work or when not working performed chores around the house.

The writer's mother met a very soft spoken, compassionate and caring person in Thomas Johnson. They were married and he unconditionally accepted the writer's mother's six young children. He is a hardworking person and is skilled in many areas. In addition to always maintaining a full time job, he would aggressively seek out additional works on the side to keep the family's head above water. The marriage produced three more children for a total of nine. Both parents worked hard to provide for the family. While the parents worked, most of the writer and siblings' time were spent with his great-grand mother, Louvenia Smalls. She was a strict disciplinary but did it in a loving way. She insisted that attendance and participation in Sunday school had to be adhered to and was strongly encouraged. Much of the writer's religious beliefs were formed through the nurturing and encouragement of his great-grandmother, who passed away in 1969. She taught the writer so much through proverbial sayings and love for God.

The writer's mother worked so much until there was little time allowable for one on one quality time with her, except when writer or his siblings were ill. One day when the writer was seven years old he and other children in the community were playing around an outside fire and the writer's ragged jeans caught on fire. As he ran, as was his norm out of fear, the wind intensified the fire. By the time the fire was extinguished he had received severe burn (third degree) on his right leg which required him going to the hospital every day to have the burn properly cared for and new dressings applied.

Although the writer's pain was intense to say the least, the one on one time he spent with his mother was memorable and delightful. It was not often that he and his siblings got the opportunity to have her to all to themselves.

### **The Life Of Faith Begins**

As the writer got older he continued his attendance and participation with the church throughout his high school days but with less passion than earlier times in his life and especially after his great-grandmother died. He attended church reluctantly and hesitantly because his mother gave him no other alternative, but whenever possible he would avoid attending. The requirement that everyone continued to attend church remained a part of the family's rule even after the writer's great-grandmother's death. Subsequently, the writer began to question the necessity of attending church weekly. He was looking forward to finishing high school and leaving home so he could make his own decisions concerning church versus what he wanted to do on Sunday mornings.

The writer's high school days were very uneventful and hum drum. He did very few things that high school students found exciting. He never engaged in the party life and refrained from drinking alcohol because he feared that alcoholism was a hereditary trait in his father's family and would affect him. His father, Robert Irving Gordon and an aunt died at an early age from the disease.

After completing high school, rather than going directly into college the writer left home and enlisted in the United States Army. He found himself away from home and family for the very first time in his life. Six months after leaving home he was stationed in West Germany and was forced to mature rapidly because of choices he had to make.

Refusing to engage in the fast life just to cope with the loneliness he felt there, he avoided the drug and alcohol scene and searched for what was familiar to him, the church. It was ironic that when the writer was free to make his own decision concerning church attendance he found himself looking for a church to attend. He realized very quickly that what he thought was the ideal situation for him to escape parental oversight and the constant conflicts, which surfaced almost daily, were not so glamorous when faced with having the option of deciding rather to attend or not attend.

The writer returned to Johns Island, South Carolina spending three years and honorably discharged from the Army. He married the woman he dated before leaving home and with whom he had a daughter. The writer found it difficult to adjust to civilian life with the added responsibility of supporting a family so three months later he re-enlisted in the United States Army and with his wife and daughter moved to his new station at Fort Bragg, North Carolina for the next four years. It was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina that the writer started feeling his religious conviction and an intense desire to return to his home church, Greater Saint John on Johns Island, South Carolina to pursue whatever it was that God had for him to do. He felt in his spirit that it was something that could not be delayed beyond his second enlistment, so to everyone's surprise and against their advice to remain in the United States Army, he decided to no longer pursue a career in the military and returned home uncertain of what direction career wise to pursue and how he would support his family.

Upon returning to Johns Island, South Carolina, the writer reconnected with Greater Saint John AME Church and immediately engaged in various ministries, such as Sunday school teacher, the Young Adult and Male choirs, the usher board, and the Junior

Trustee board. However, those ministries, though important, did not seem to fill the void that remained and the writer felt that there was more that the Lord had for him to do in ministry beyond what he was then involved in.

The blessing of God was with him and his family and God was guiding him in his vocational aspirations. He truly never experienced unemployment and refused to wait on an unemployment check. The writer spent his first day home discharged from the Army after serving for seven years total, looking for employment. He found employment that first day and went to work the second day. He was hired to work in a warehouse distributing office equipment and furniture. While working there during the day and attending Trident Technical College in the evening, he continued to seek other employment hoping to obtain a civil service position with the Federal government.

Eighteen months later the writer received an offer from the United States Customs Service offering him a part time position as a Warehouse Officer. Because it was a part time position, the salary was less than what he was earning in the position at the Office Furniture Warehouse. But the writer felt that the Customs Service employment opportunity would offer greater long-range opportunities for him, he accepted the position with a pay cut. He was hired January 1981, the day before President Ronald Reagan was inaugurated for the first term. It was God's will because the first action the new president took was to place a freeze on all Federal hiring.

The writer was able to apply the seven years he spent in the Army as credit for government service to his new position with the United States Customs Service, which was used to calculate for retirement and annual leave benefits. He remained with the Customs Service until he was blessed to retire on December 3, 2009 with over thirty-five



years of military and federal service. During his civil service career he held several positions such as a Warehouse Officer, an Inspectional Aide, a Customs Inspector, a Customs Senior Inspector, and an Import Specialist. The writer transferred from Customs Service in Charleston, South Carolina to Customs Service in Miami, Florida from 1983 to 1985, and worked at the Miami International Airport in Miami, Florida, returning to Charleston, South Carolina in 1985.

When the writer originally accepted employment with the Customs Service, he and his family struggled financially to survive because the position originally was a decrease in his income. However, his income was subsidized by the funds he received from military benefits of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) while he attended school.

The writer had various additional duties, called collateral duties, with the Customs Service. Those duties included him making presentations at area elementary and middle schools during the school's Career Day, speaking to teen groups sponsored by the area sororities and fraternities, managing recruiting booths at Job Fairs throughout South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina, and recruiting for the Customs Service at the Historical Black Colleges in South Carolina. The writer served as the Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), Black Employee Program Manager (BEPM), and Black History Program Coordinator for the Customs Service in Charleston, South Carolina.

The writer was perplexed and frustrated for many years while working with the Customs Service and applying for promotion opportunities. He applied many times for positions but was repeatedly denied promotions and saw positions given to other less experienced and less qualified candidates. At several points, he harbored anger and became depressed about the situation because he felt he was being treated unfairly and

being discriminated against. He followed the instructions and played the game only to see the rules change in each situation. Finally, the writer's anger transformed him to accept the obvious, that apparently the position was not for him. As situations changed and circumstances unfolded, the writer realized that if he had been promoted it would have interfered with his Pastoral ministry. The writer then applied for and was selected for a position that released him from all weekends work shifts. The writer then realized that God was directing his life so he would have more time so his ministry could expand.

### **Doors That God Opened**

The writer's coworkers respected his ministry and thought of him as their chaplain, oftentimes seeking his spiritual guidance and counsel. Equally important, the writer found that God opened doors for him, even in the secular setting, to reach many that were ripe for Christian witnessing. However, there were times when some people in the setting were less than sincere with their interaction and comments, which at times were malicious.

After the writer retired from the Customs Service he explored new and nontraditional approach to ministries to utilize the time he had acquired through retirement. The writer was approached about a position as a paid chaplain for a hospice group from Columbia, South Carolina. The writer avoided responding to the company's inquiries for several months concerning the chaplain position. He had a level of fear ministering to people that were under hospice care. The writer believed that when a patient was under hospice care that death was imminent. The company was just as determined to contact the writer and remained persistent in their attempts to reach him. The writer finally relinquished to the hospice company's request and accepted the

position. He has worked for the hospice group for two years and has found it to be an interesting and rewarding experience.

The writer has seen many of the hospice patients expire, both young and old, and is affected by each one. He learned a great deal from those patients and developed a close relationship with the family members that he had to console in bereavement. He found peace in being able to assist the hospice patients in their journey to die with dignity. The writer found God at work in those situations and it inspires him to not take life for granted and enjoy every moment of life given. This experience has strengthened the writer's faith and belief in God.

The writer has experienced many challenges in his personal life as he unpacked those issues and they have shaped his outlook on the spiritual journey. He has accepted the negatives in his life and turned them to positives in his ministry. As a child, the writer harbored anger, hurt, and disappointments towards the adults in his life that he believed were the source of his emotional pains. He found it difficult to accept the fact that his parents got divorced and that he never really knew the real person his father was, only hearing the negatives about him. When his was not intoxicated he was an extremely quiet person. A few years after his father died the writer developed an intense desire to learn more about him and for several years it reached the point that he would dream about spending time with him and that his death was not real. He never discussed this with anyone for fear of what they would think of him, but God eventually took that fear away.

### **Personal Challenges in Life**

The writer also experienced the challenge of divorce in his personal relationship after twenty years of marriage and two children, a daughter and a son. This failure was

devastating to him because it was the one thing he was determined to avoid. The divorce occurred while the writer was in the Pastoral ministry and it placed doubts in his mind about the institution of marriage, his faith in people and his desire to continue engagement in ministries such as marital counseling and performing marriages ceremonies.

During the divorce process and immediately after the divorce, the writer did not want to appear in public or fellowship with his peers. He just wanted to become recluse and drown in his anger, but God brought him through it once again and granted him a second chance at marriage. The writer married a young woman named Patrisha, whom he met in a church setting. She was originally from an extremely small town and she applies those small town virtues and principles to the marriage with calmness, tranquility, composure and peacefulness. She had a son from a previous relationship who means the world to her. She makes every effort to keep everyone happy and involved as a family.

The writer once again was able to face the public, fellowship with his peers, counsel couples on marital issues, and perform wedding ceremonies. He concluded that through all of his hurts and disappointments God was molding him for ministries and preparing him to not just settle and survive, but to excel in his context.

### **A Call Upon His Life**

The writer began noticing the call upon his life as early as 1978 but did not respond to the call because he did not understand what was happening to him internally. To further complicate the matter he did not have anyone that he could consult with that could clarify the feeling he was experiencing. He reasoned that he was merely encountering a spiritual conviction alerting him to alter his life's direction. He involved

himself in church work and business ventures to counter the feelings. The writer tried to disregard the continued feelings that were tugging at him to do more than operate on the boards and choirs in the church. Nevertheless, he proceeded with his life in and out of the church believing the call would eventually diminish.

The writer experienced a dramatic event in his life in 1989 that completely unmasked him emotionally and psychologically. He attempted to pull himself back on track but was unsuccessful. After an extended amount of time passed, the writer was still emotionally crippled and endangered of inflicting physical harm upon himself. To his disappointment, the writer's pride was shattered as he found that the negative motives of people whom he held in high regard were uncovered and he began to see God as his only hope for restoration and reconciliation.

The writer dedicated his life to God and grew spiritually as he consistently studied the word of God. In 1989 the writer finally surrendered and accepted the call to enter ministry. However, he personally had serious concerns about the direction of the AME Church and its interest in young adults and youth retention. Not accepting the details of the church structure, the writer seriously considered other denominations. He believed at that time that the AME Church to be inclusive with the young adults and youth he had in mind. Having this feeling, the writer studied while he remained in an inactive state. He was misunderstood for having such a position and was criticized severely by other ministers for what they believed to be a challenge against the status quo.

The writer, confused, pondered several months about the direction the ministry would lead him. God revealed the answer to his question through a dream one Sunday morning. In the dream, he was directed to minister in the setting that he was reared and to

the people that have known him his entire life. The writer received details in the dream of when to attend and where to sit in the congregation. He was shown how the pastor would know that he was there and would look for him and invite him to be seated in the pulpit.

The scene played out exactly as the writer had seen in the dream. The pastor, Reverend Renty Pinckney located the writer seated in the congregation and invited him to come to the pulpit asking him to pray for the congregation during the invocation. As the writer prayed, something strange happened. The younger people that attended the service but were disconnected from the worship service started to respond to the prayer. The congregation appeared to change that day and excitement returned to the worship experience, which had been missing, from that setting.

The next day the writer once again pondered as to rather this was the setting to pursue ministry. He found every excuse possible to not pursue his ministry at Greater Saint John. That Monday evening the writer was seated at his kitchen table wondering how he could assist in that setting, but the doors of the church remain closed from Sunday afternoon to the next Sunday morning. While he was contemplating thoughts his telephone rang and it was Reverend Renty Pinckney on the other end of the telephone. Reverend Pinckney told the writer that he needed his help to reach the young people and to teach Bible Study and lead prayer service on whatever night of the week the writer desired. The Lord was answering all of the writer's concerns relating to ministry opportunities' for young adults and youth. As a result the young adults and youth started feeling a sense of reconnection to the congregation.

That same evening the writer received a telephone call from a woman named Lillian Morrison, an evangelist in the Pentecostal church. The writer had met Evangelist

Morrison briefly at several revival meetings at other churches. He knew that she had no knowledge of the spiritual struggles he was experiencing. She told the writer that he had been on her mind all day and the Lord revealed to her that the writer was troubled about the direction of his ministry. She said to the writer that God desires that he return to the setting that he was questioning, remain there under the supervision of an older pastor and that he should learn all that he possibly could because he would not remain there very long because God had plans for his ministry. The writer accepted the instruction and served under the pastoral leadership of Reverend Renty Pinckney at Greater Saint John.

### **Steps Into Ministry And Higher Education**

The writer entered into the ministry in the AME Church and studied under the supervision of the Conference Board of Examiners as prescribed in the Book of Discipline of AME Church. He was admitted to the South Carolina Annual Conference in 1990 at Bethel AME Church in Saint George, South Carolina. After the Annual Conference the writer returned to Greater Saint John as a licentiate. Several Sundays after the writer was admitted to the Annual Conference the Presiding Elder, Reverend Zedekiah Grady (later elected a Bishop) came to Greater Saint John to hold the first Quarterly Conference.

Earlier that same week the writer was inspired to develop a sermon. He could not understand the reason for developing and writing the sermon because there was no scheduled preaching engagement pending for the writer, but he was obedient to the Lord. He developed the sermon and placed it on the desk in his office at home. The writer was scheduled to work the Sunday that the Presiding Elder came to Greater Saint John. When the writer arrived at work he was told that he could leave and go to church and if he was

needed the coworker would contact him. The writer rushed home, got dressed and was walking out the door when an inner voice instructed him to take the sermon with him. The writer returned back into the house and got sermon, threw it on the back seat of his automobile and rushed to worship service. When the writer arrived at the church the service had not started yet.

The Presiding Elder would normally preach whenever he comes to Quarterly Conference, however, Presiding Elder Grady told the pastor that he was exhausted and wanted the writer to preach that Sunday because it would have given him an opportunity to hear the writer preach and allow him to evaluate the writer's ability and gifts. The writer went back to his automobile and got the sermon he was inspired to bring. After the writer preached the sermon, the Presiding Elder told the pastor and congregation that he was impressed and would do everything within his power to retain the writer in his district and would recommend him to pastor one day in the district. Several months later the Bishop (Frederick Calhoun James) and the leaders of the AME Church in South Carolina purchased the facility previously owned by the Anglican Church and decided to start a new initiative, named James Chapel AME Church. The church was located in a highly populated, low income, and high crime area. Bishop James and the leadership were faced with the decision of assigning a pastor to that church to build a congregation. There were many experienced pastors that wanted the assignment and the opportunity of being a founding pastor. However, during the dedication service at the new church, Bishop James assigned the writer as pastor of the new congregation.

The writer began to pastor as a licentiate, meaning he was not authorized to consecrate the communion. At the next Annual conference the writer was recommended



by Ministerial Board of Examiners to move forward to the Class of First Year Studies. However, when he sat down he was called back before the bishop and recommended under the Missionary Rule to be elected and ordained an Itinerant Deacon.

The writer completed the process of training under the Board of Examiners in three years, a process that usually takes four years. He was ordained an Itinerant Elder, the final ordination in 1993. The AME Church did not have an educational requirement for the entering ministry and receiving ordination when the writer went through the Ministerial Board of Examiners. However, at the AME Church General Conference held in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2004 the AME Church passed legislation requiring that candidates for ministry must possess a Bachelor's Degree before they can be elected and ordained an Itinerant Deacon and a Master of Divinity Degree and before they can be elected and ordained an Itinerant Elder. The writer had an Associate's Degree from Trident Technical College in Human Services when he received both the deacon and elder's ordination. There was no requirement that he attends college or pursues a higher degree. However, he wanted to continue to improve himself educationally for his personal reasons. He also promised two special individuals that he would go back to college and earn a Bachelor's Degree. First, he promised his mother that he would one day to go college. That was an agreement between them when he opted to enlist in the United States Army after graduating from high school. Secondly, when he received his Itinerant Elder's ordination, Reverend Levern Stevenson told the writer that although he was not required to go back to school that he would suggest that he did so if the writer desired to pastor some of the larger churches in the State. Reverend Stevenson told the writer that many talented preachers never got the opportunity to pastor the larger

churches because of their lack of formal education. So the writer promised him that he would return to college and earn his degree.

The writer also had a deep aspiration to attend college and pursue his Bachelor's Degree and eventually enroll and attend seminary and earn a Master of Divinity Degree. The writer also felt uncomfortable as a member of the Conference Board of Examiners and telling the candidates for ministry of the educational requirements while he had not fulfilled the same requirements. The writer, while working fulltime with the Customs Service, often working mandatory overtime assignments, serving as the pastor of a congregation with over four hundred members, performing weddings and funerals services, visiting sick members, and balancing his time with his nine years old son, returned to college attending evening and weekend classes. The writer was completely overwhelmed but just as determined to fulfill his personal goals and expectations of graduating from college. The writer also went through an unpleasant divorce while as he attended classes but was not deterred from continuing to pursue his degree. The last semester the writer needed a class to graduate that was only offered on campus on Saturday at 7:30 AM. The commute to campus was an hour and a half and the writer would have to leave home at 5:30 AM to be there.

He started evening and weekend classes in 1994 and graduated in May of 1997 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Organizational Management from Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina.

The writer's desire to educate himself further continued to burn deep within him after graduating from Voorhees College. He was unable to attend seminary because there

were none within commuting distance of where he lived and he was still employed full time.

The writer also wanted to attend Graduate School and earn a Master's Degree in Business or Management to assist him in the business operations of the church, so he enrolled in the management curriculum at Webster University. The writer once again attended evening classes fulltime while maintaining a fulltime job and pastoring the four hundred members plus congregation, attending all programs and events, teaching Bible Study, preparing sermons, visiting the sick, and performing weddings and funerals.

The Master of Management Program taught the writer how to organize himself to meet his responsibilities and to teach and perform his pastoral duties. Each class required a written paper and a Power Point Presentation. The presentation helped the writer in making Bible Study more interesting. The writer received a Master's degree in Management from Webster University in 2004.

The writer continued to search hoping to locate accredited seminaries that offered Distance Learning classes with the possibility of earning a Master of Divinity. He approached different schools but none of them offered what he was seeking. At his Annual Conference in 2007 Reverend John Foster, a visitor addressed the conference. At the time Reverend Foster was the pastor of Saint Phillip AME Church in Savannah, Georgia at the time. The writer, the Annual Conference secretary, introduced himself to Reverend Foster and found in the conversation that the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) was offering Distance Learning classes and Saint Phillip Church was a host site. Reverend Foster gave the writer a business card and the contact information with

directions to the church. The writer traveled to Savannah, Georgia the next Saturday and met the members of the Distance Learning Class.

### **Pursuit of Theological Education**

The writer enrolled immediately at ITC and began attending class in August of 2007. Some of the classes were offered at the site in Savannah, Georgia, some at home by satellite telecast, and others on the ITC Campus. The writer travelled back and forth to Atlanta, Georgia taking classes using his vacation time and personal funds for the hotel stays. He continued to work fulltime and pastor fulltime as well throughout the entire time he attended ITC.

The writer graduated from ITC, Turner Theological Seminary on May 10, 2010. He finally earned the Master of Divinity Degree that he so badly desired. The writer enrolled in the Doctoral Program at United Theological Seminary (UTS) in January 2011 along with many of the group members that graduated from ITC in May 2010. He never considered entering the Doctoral program because he only wanted his Master of Divinity. But with the urging of Reverend Daniel Stevenson and the encouraging of Dean Harold Hudson the writer decided to pursue it.

Once entered into the program he continues to be focused because of the guidance and directions from his mentors, Doctors Robert Walker and Kenneth Cummings. The writer now looks forward to earning the Doctor of Ministry Degree hoping to influence and inspire other pastors to return to school themselves. The UTS adventure is an unbelievable journey. It is difficult for this writer to visualize himself, a young man from Johns Island, South Carolina, now preparing to defend his doctoral project.

The writer finds it more comfortable to communicate with the young adults and youth with his formal education because they are much more intelligent in the areas of technology than twenty years ago.

The writer enjoys the ability to engage in conversations with the young adults and youth with an open mind because of more up to date lessons he learned in higher education. He remembers a former bishop of the State of South Carolina, the Bishop John Hurst Adams saying that it becomes frustrating when the pews become more educated than the pulpits. That statement has inspired the writer throughout his matriculation at each institution he attended. The writer has spent innumerable hours studying at home and in the library, preparing papers, developing PowerPoint presentations, and getting ready for examinations so he could be a source to reconnect the divide between our older and younger generation and have those return that have left the church.

### **Pastoral Appointments**

The writer has been honored to pastor three congregations in the AME Church over the past twenty-one and a half years. Each assignment was unique in its own way yet some of the same issues exist for this writer. The writer's interest in preserving the presence of the young adults and youth has not wavered and continues to be placed at the top of his agenda. He has made this known to each congregation he has pastored.

When the writer started pastoring he had no members and only the building. The absence of members gave the writer the opportunity to reach out to younger, un-churched prospects and after proper training offer them positions that are normally filled by the older members in established traditional churches. The writer truly believed the Lord is

working on his side in this endeavor. Four months after the writer started pastoring he reported fifty-three new members to the Annual conference.

The church grew over the years with young members. He remained at that church for six and a half years and took in over three hundred members during that time period. When the writer pastored James Chapel AME Church eighty five percent of the members were under forty-five years old and held key positions in the church structure.

The writer was able to apply his passion for ministry by having the chance to work with such a young group of members. He also taught them the principle of tithing and they responded. That was an unusual task in getting young adults and youth to adhere to the concept of tithing.

The writer was asked to agree to pastor another church and consented to accept the new assignment. He moved to New Jerusalem AME Church on October 3, 1997. In this assignment the writer was moved from a suburban and high crime setting to a rural and quiet setting. The writer faced many challenges at this assignment. Many of the members of New Jerusalem Church attended middle and high school with the writer, which made it a bit uncomfortable. The membership of the congregation had declined tremendously over the years. The church's roster showed over three hundred members but the actual attendance was less than fifty members. The facility was old, small, and dilapidated. The members that remained active were convinced that leadership should come from the members and not the assigned pastor. There was no tithing program in place and the incoming revenue was extremely low. There were no young adults and youth participation in any activity in the church. There was no Bible study and the

Sunday school attendance was very poor to the count of about three members including the teacher/superintendent.

The people were wounded spiritually and held a wall of defense to the leadership. The writer applied his skills by first instilling pride back in the congregants for their church. He made successful efforts to earn the members' confidence and trust. He laid forth a plan to rebuild the memberships' wounded spiritual lives and the physical structure, which they worshipped. One of the key tactics the writer utilized was to make the young adults and youth understand that they were the key to the success of the church, and rebuilding the church building had to include consideration of the young people's needs for ministries.

The writer led the efforts to build a facility that was able to accommodate two and a half times the number of members on the church's official roster. The writer continuously reminded the church board members that they were not building for the present but for the future and for the young adults and youth so they would not have to face the increase cost of building a facility later. The new building included classrooms, office spaces, a much-needed church nursery, and a much larger fellowship hall.

The young adults and youth attendance to church increased, their participation in worship was returned, new ministries for them were organized, and they were re-energized in their work ethics in church.

The writer remained at this congregation for thirteen years and continued to see growth in the young adults and youth ministry and left the church and its member's debt free and financially stable.

### **Present Context**

The writer was once again asked to accept another assignment to another church. He agreed and was reassigned to the church he currently serves, Greater Macedonia AME Church. The church is located in the historical of district downtown Charleston, South Carolina.

### **The Larger Context**

This assignment transferred the writer from the rural setting to an inner city location. He was tasked with reviving another declining congregation whose young adults and youth members were leaving in large numbers to several flourishing Baptist Churches in the area.

Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in the Ansonborough neighborhood of Charleston, South Carolina. South Carolina is one of the thirteen original colonies of the United States of America and has a rich and varied history. Prior to the English settling in South Carolina, the French and Spanish explorers attempted to settle there. The first permanent settlement was established in 1670 on the coast of present Charleston. The colony was called Carolina, named after King Charles I. The Carolina was then divided into South Carolina and North Carolina in 1710.<sup>1</sup>

The settlers in South Carolina, especially in the coastal area, built large plantations and grew crops such as rice and indigo. Prior to the Revolutionary War it was one of the richest colonies in the young country and produced wealthy merchants and plantation owners.

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<sup>1</sup>History of South Carolina <http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov/a-brief-history-of-south-carolina> (accessed January 2011).



The growing agricultural crops were bringing huge profits to South Carolina, which in turn required large numbers of African slaves to be brought to the state to provide labor. Later on after the invention of the cotton gin cotton would become a major crop in the upper state as rice and indigo were in the coastal area of the State.

South Carolina contributed many leaders to the Revolutionary War. In fact, more Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes were fought in South Carolina than any other state, including major engagements at Sullivan's Island, Camden, Kings Mountain, and Cowpen. South Carolina ratified the United States Constitution on May 23, 1788, becoming the eighth state to enter the union.<sup>2</sup>

Unhappy with many federal laws in the mid-eighteen hundreds, South Carolina played a major role in the Civil War. It was the first of the Southern states to secede from the union. The first shot of the Civil War was fired from Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861 on Fort Sumter. The war devastated the state's economy and its male population. Charleston, South Carolina was one of the pivotal cities of the new country, the thirteen original colonies. It was also one of the leading cities of the new country prior to the Civil War. In 1690, Charleston was the fifth largest city in North America, and remained among the ten largest cities in the United States through the 1840 census. It is currently the second largest city in South Carolina and is the county seat of Charleston County. The city's original name was Charles Town, named after King Charles II of England.<sup>3</sup> Charleston has some of the most beautiful architectural structured homes and plantation style mansions found in America.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Charleston South Carolina, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston,\\_South\\_Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston,_South_Carolina) (accessed January 2011).

The residents have taken great care to preserve these historic structures and protect this colonial America lifestyle by developing a strong Board of Architectural Review that have tremendous decision making power. Several noted sites of historical significance that dates back to the Revolutionary War era found in Charleston are the Edmonston-Alston House, Nathaniel Russell House, the Calhoun Mansion, the Miles Brewton House, and the Heyward-Washington House.

In addition there are entire areas that are historical such as Rainbow Row, and Cabbage Row. It also has the oldest church in South Carolina, St. Michael's Episcopal Church. Charleston is known as the Holy City due to the large number of churches and steeples, which are seen covering the city's skyline. Charleston is also known for its early tolerance of non-Catholics religious practices.

### **Immediate Context**

Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1911 and on February 27, 2011 celebrated its 100th Church Anniversary. The founder was a young preacher, the Reverend Simon Bonneau, (1877-1913). Greater Macedonia was founded on the east side of Charleston, South Carolina and to this day, remains in the general vicinity of the first church. The original site of the church was on the corner of Calhoun and Washington Street and worship services were originally held on an open lot. The members would bring their own seats to service. Reverend Bonneau was a great humanitarian and used his own land as collateral to secure the land on Washington Street. The first sanctuary remained on the Washington Street site until 1939.

Thinking of Paul's vision of the Macedonian Man's request for him to come there and help, the early members of the congregation named it the Macedonia Mission. In 1923, Macedonia Mission joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the name was changed to Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of the Right Reverend Benjamin Franklin Lee, the AME Bishop of the state of South Carolina.

In 1939 the City of Charleston Housing Authority requested that the church relocate to another site so the Washington Street property could be used to construct low-income housings. The church moved to its present site on 78 Alexander Street on the edge of Ansonborough Neighborhood, a historic, influential neighborhood in one the elite areas of old Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

Greater Macedonia has served as a beacon of light in the east side community of Charleston, South Carolina. It has set an example by engaging in the area of entrepreneurship. Several properties were purchased by the congregation and utilized to serve the community. A building located at 341 East Bay Street is used as the fellowship hall, church school classrooms, and a multipurpose building that host district and community meetings. An original Charleston house called the Blue House on 47 Calhoun Street served as an affordable housing home and a two-story office complex building at 49 Calhoun Street that was leased out twenty-five years to area businesses.

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<sup>4</sup>Souvenir Journal of Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church, February 2011.

During Greater Macedonia's illustrious history, sixteen men have served as its pastor:

Reverend Simon Bonneau

Reverend Bicana

Reverend Park

Reverend E. D. Mac

Reverend J. J. Chestnut

Reverend R. A. Rawls

Reverend Sandy Simmons

Reverend M. B. McPherson

Reverend M. E. Brown

Reverend T. W. Ball

Reverend G. B. Mitchell

Reverend F. B. Clark

Reverend James Nedd

Reverend Levern Stevenson

Reverend Freddie Lee Davis

Reverend William H. Alston

Reverend Lawrence E. Gordon.

Additionally, seventeen members of Greater Macedonia received the call to the ministry and were ordained. Seven of those members served as pastors over other congregations.<sup>5</sup> The racial ratio is one hundred percent African American.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The active membership roll is approximately two hundred and twenty members of which approximately sixty percent are above the age of forty-five and approximately forty percent is below the age of forty five. The gender makeup is approximately sixty five percent females and forty five percent males.<sup>6</sup>

The Church is deeply rooted in traditional African American worship style. The older congregants are more comfortable with singing traditional church hymns throughout the worship service and their celebration is limited to hand clapping, dancing, and verbal expressions such as, *Praise the Lord, Amen*, and *hallelujah*. The older congregants have the tendency to impose their style of worship on the younger congregants. This creates a problem in that the younger congregants are more comfortable with a contemporary style of worship and music rather than the traditional style with hymns. The younger congregants also like to celebrate worship with praise dance and praise and worship moments.

There is definitely a gap that exists between generations in the church but it is our job as leaders to build strong relationships to bridge that gap. Edward Hammett contends in his book, *Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People Over 60*, “that the tension between modern and postmodern culture is the primary issue.

He describes the differences between generations—worldview, spiritual understanding and leadership styles. He also states that communication and willingness to listen are keys to change.<sup>7</sup> The church needs to nurture those young adults who do attend church and include them in leadership and decision-making. The church must give them the tools for reaching their peers.

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<sup>6</sup>Membership Roster of Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church, June 2011.

<sup>7</sup>Business Market Profile [www.crda.org/business/market\\_profile](http://www.crda.org/business/market_profile) (accessed March 2011).

The church is engaged in several ministries that encourage youth participation in church. The youth at Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church are very smart, intelligent, energetic, observant, always willing to participate and constantly demonstrating their talents and their love for Jesus. They participate on all levels of the AME Church and have won various awards, i.e., Bible bowl, self-denial essays, poetry, drawing, etc. They do not hesitate to express their feelings. They enjoy participating on the pulpit during our Fourth Sunday morning service and most of them have mastered the order of service. Therefore, the leaders of Greater Macedonia AME Church are continuously working toward bridging the gap between generations.

*Acolytes* - An acolyte is a Pastor's helper, who lights and extinguishes the altar candles and help with other religious ceremonies.

*Young People Division* - A unified body with Christ-like qualities, who are building a connectional bond that demonstrates pride through cooperation.

*Young Adult Ministry* - Their mission is for all people to be aware of God through His self-disclosure. They seek to network, promote and encourage economic stability as they grow as sons and daughters of God.

*Young Women's Initiative* - Recruit, reclaim and retain. This mission is to come up with creative ideas to recruit new members and appeal to young women.

*Debutantes and Masters Commission* - Promotes the principles and doctrines of Christian Education as set forth in the guidelines of this commission. They utilize their spiritual gifts and resources to guide, instruct and instill Christ-like attributes in our youth.

*Richards Allen Young Adult Council* - Committed to engaging young adults in total ministry to benefit the total person. RAYAC is committed to ministry that is apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastoral. Greater Macedonia sponsors and annual program during Black History Month recognizing persons far and near regardless of religion, age, ethnicity or socio-economic status.

*Youth Partnership Group* - To recruit and train youths to formulate an effective community strategy, mobilizing existing local resources to prevent crime, violence and drug abuse.

*Youth Choir* - Mission is to utilize various modes of music to enhance worship services through the singing of Hymns, Anthems, Traditional and Contemporary Gospel Music.

*Sisters for Christ Praise Dancers* - Composed of children and young ladies.

*Brother for Christ Men Group* - Composed of young men whose goal is to minister to the people through religious music, allowing the Lord to move through them as they praise the Lord.

*Saturday School* - Formed to educate the children in other areas that they were not receiving in public or private school. Professionals from all walks of life are brought in to communicate and dialog with the young people.

*Vacation Bible School* - As a part of the Christian Education Department, we have our annual Vacation Bible School, which focuses on religious education and reaching out to the community. The VBS is held during the summer months, teaching the children more about Jesus so they can minister to others.

The following are some of the places that our young adults and youth department have visited:

Disney World, Cruise to the Bahamas, Virginia Beach Gospel Concert, Church Retreat, Kiawah Island, Martin Luther King Center, Atlanta, GA, Kings Dominion - Virginia, Bush Gardens, Columbia Zoo, State Capitol, Charleston Aquarium, Washington, DC - Tour of Government Buildings, including the White House, Whirlin Waters Water Park, James Island County Park, Movie Night/Sleep Over and Youth Explosion/Talent Night.

This congregation reported over six hundred members about twenty years ago.

When the writer arrived at the present setting the church's membership had declined to one hundred and ninety nine. The writer faced the challenge of strategizing to reverse the trend of losing members and especially the young adults and youth, to retain those members that remain and reclaim the ones that left.

The writer also arrived to a congregation divided on the issue of relocating to an area where potential for growth could take place or remain in the location that many hold sacred but recognize its inability to accommodate growth and develop new ministries for the young adults and youth of the church thereby ensuring a bright future. The writer also found that the older members coveted all the positions and locked the young adults and youth out of any decision making in the operation of the church.

The writer's challenge was two-fold; re-igniting interest and excitement into the young adults and youth of Greater Macedonia so they would feel a sense of partnership in the church and not feel disconnected from it, and getting the older members to understand that the future survival of the church depends on the inclusiveness of all the members and the young adults and youth have equal consideration when offering their opinions. The writer is also interested in learning what these flourishing congregations are offering to the young adults and youth that we at Greater Macedonia are not offering.



The writer has somewhat disrupted the seemingly calmness in the setting by naming young adults as representatives to function on every board and auxiliaries in Greater Macedonia AME Church, making it known that they are to be recognized and respected. Additionally, young adults and youth have opportunities to express their opinions and give their input to the pastor and the local church leadership organization through other avenues established by this writer so he could gain a greater understanding of what they are thinking but do not feel quite comfortable enough to express.

The writer remembers the feeling of helplessness as a youth growing up and not given an opportunity to explain his thoughts, hurts, and pain to the adults. Therefore, the writer holds dear the young adults and youth's position in society in general and in the church in particular. The writer is locked in on accepting the opinions and expressions offered by the young adults and youth of the church and believe with this project. If the mainstream denominations would listen, everyone can come to an agreeable conclusion that the young adults and youth are important in the life of the church. The writer is determined to discover how to have the young adults and youth in his context to rediscover what brought them to Greater Macedonia AME Church initially and how it is important for them to remain and to help convince those that left to return.

### **Synergy**

The writer of this project model has toiled in the area of Pastoral ministry for over twenty years. During those years he has recalled his *story* as a youth in the community and the church where he was reared. He remembers the situations particularly in the church, but also in the home and community wherein the young adults and youth were not afford opportunities to express their opinions on events that they were expected to

participate in. However, he held throughout his Pastoral ministry those sacred memories because he realizes that they are an essential part of who he has become on his spiritual journey. His history has directed him to lead efforts in extending to young adults and youth the opportunities to engage in every aspect of ministry.

His early life memories of going to church at Greater Saint John African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, in Johns Island, South Carolina were mixed with both the positive and negative thoughts. He loved the church his family attended for many generations and the few programs that focused on the young adults and youth. He has great memories of the early Sunday school attendance, Easter programs, and young adults and youth choirs. The older adult Christians gave the young adults and youth opportunities to demonstrate what they learned in Sunday school by having explained those things learned in a combined assembly.

However, there was no emphasis placed on preparing the young adults and youth for experiencing life in different settings beyond Johns Island and Greater Saint John AME Church. There are so many ministries in existence that focus on young adults and youth and this writer had no idea they existed until he left home after enlisting in the United States Army. They would have prepared him for many of the challenges he encountered when he attempted to apply his worship experience with the worship experience of others.

Now this writer takes pleasure in the vision God has given him with the passion to pursue ministries to the young adults and youth of the church. With continuous reminders to the older adult members of the church, constant and persistent prayers for the implementation of the project, and relevant trainings to a cross-generational section of the

church members, the development of this model of ministry shall provide an avenue to address the concerns of the young adults and youth that are attempting to carve their purpose in the Christian church will be able to express their opinions and be an active and respected participants of the church structure.

The writer is the Senior Pastor of Greater Macedonia AME Church. One who grew up in the AME Church, the writer has served in various capacities in the church as a young adult and youth, and in the ministry.

The writer currently serves as the conference Christian Education Director (CED) in the South Carolina Annual Conference of the AME Church in South Carolina. Much of his knowledge about the connectional church came through his lifelong membership in the AME Church.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT**

The area of ministry designed to maintain young adults and youth membership and attendance at Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church has declined dramatically over recent years. This problem of declining young adults and youth membership is not exclusive to Greater Macedonia but is a problem that exists over the entire connection of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and in the other older traditional denominations. However, non-denominational churches seem to have a grasp on this issue and have placed procedures in motion to address this problem. The leadership of the non-denominational church has made gains by capturing the young adults and youth who have become disgruntled with the churches of their parents and grandparents and are leaving in record numbers.

Unlike non-denominational churches, the mainline denominations of the Christian churches (including the AME Churches in general and Greater Macedonia in particular) have failed to acknowledge that there is a serious void in terms of emphasis for ministries that are designated for young adults and youth in this modern era. The assumption is that this particular group will automatically continue to attend church because of their connection to older family members that have remained loyal to their family's church out of respect for tradition. The Young adults and the youth of today do not share that sense of dedication and commitment as the generation over forty years old. Non-

denominational churches offer a variety of ways to approach worship and that is drawing the under forty-year-old age group away from family churches.

Many changes have taken place in the world around us, yet our traditional church has refused to keep up with the changes and adapt its ministries to parallel the changes.

Now faced with the reality of declining church membership and attendance, Greater Macedonia and other mainline denominational churches are at the point that they can no longer continue to remain closed minded to this serious issue, pretend that all is well and proceed forward with business as usual. It is now at the point where new and more innovative ministries are mandatory and critically needed if we are to reclaim the young adults and youth that have left the church and retain the ones that have not left but stand at a crossroad. The leadership of the traditional denominational churches must find ways to establish cutting edge ministries in order to compete on a level playing field in their efforts to make the transitional changes.

It is true that the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean that ministries for young adults and youth should not change to adapt to the present context. In doing so, the churches must be willing to accept methods such as that of modern technologies. Just like many of the older members are lost when it comes to using technologies the young adults and youth would be completely lost without the utilization of those technologies.

The use of available technology can greatly influence the worship experience and operation of a congregation. It is important that ministries be developed that incorporate

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<sup>1</sup>Heb 13:8.

full use of accessible technologies that can enhance the interest and involvement of the targeted group of under forty years old.

In the Methodist tradition of communication the Class Leaders' system established by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley remains in place today and is still used as the primary source of relaying pertinent information to members of the Methodist church in what once was a somewhat timely manner. But that method is no longer effective in this new age of instant messaging, texting, and emailing.

In order to develop new and relevant ministries the focus on young adults and youth in the religious setting would require urgent changes in the thought process of members that are above forty years old. However, we understand that changes are not easily accepted in any organization including the church. In the book, *Leading Change*, author John P. Kotter says, establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gaining needed cooperation. With high complacency, transformations usually go nowhere because few people are even interested in working on the change problem. With urgency low, it is difficult to put together a group with enough power and credibility to guide the effort or to convince key individuals to spend the time necessary to create and communicate a change vision.<sup>2</sup> There must be an atmosphere of urgency among the members who are forty and over and especially within the leadership structure and decision makers of the church to take actions relative to cooperating to bring about changes such as means of communicating other than the old method of the Class Leader system.

However, the leader and members in power in the church just like in an organization must recognize that with making changes it is important to consider that

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<sup>2</sup>John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 36.

there is power in culture and folks do seek culture compatibility. This of course naturally locks out young adults and youth trying to be accepted.

Kotter list three primary reasons that culture is powerful. (1) Because individuals are selected and indoctrinated so well; (2) Because the culture exerts itself through the actions of hundreds or thousands of people; and (3) Because all of this happens without much conscious intent and thus is difficult to challenge or even discuss.<sup>3</sup> In organizing changes it is essential to get young adults and youth to understand that culture should be respected.

### **Contributors to Young Adults and Youth Ministries**

Social media allows the church to reach out to more than just the members that attend church weekly and are aware of events transpiring. Social media reaches out to the members that are restricted or limited from attending church because of various reasons. Likewise, social media reaches the young adults and youth that otherwise would not be aware of nor interested in what is going on in the church. According to an article written by Chris Brown on August 4, 2012, “New Study Finds Only a Very Small Percentage of Americans use Facebook or Twitter for Faith-based Purposes”, only six percent of Americans have joined a faith-based Facebook group, despite the fact that nearly half the country uses the social-networking site a couple times a week and over eighty percent of the population ascribes to some form of religion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>4</sup>Global Post America’s World News Site, “New Study Finds Only a Very Small Percentage of Americans use Facebook or Twitter for Faith-based Purposes,” Chris Jackson/AFP/Getty Images. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/Americas/united-states/120804> (accessed August 4, 2012).

Because the young adults and youth are so involved in social media the church must find ways to use it as a source of attracting them to capture their participation and integrate technology with new ministries.

The Reverend Jarrett Washington made a presentation to the South Carolina Annual Conference of the AME Church in South Carolina entitled, “Digital Age and Dirt Roads.” He proclaimed that it is extremely important to use technology and social media in the church to reach the eighteen to forty five years old. It helps us reinforce what God is saying, it keeps us on our toes, it allows us to reach others outside of our churches, and it gives our churches a broader platform.<sup>5</sup>

Washington goes on to explain that there are three areas in particular where churches can utilize social media, such as the use of Websites, BLOGS, Facebook and Twitter.<sup>6</sup> The young adults and youth today spend a huge amount of their time communicating on Facebook and Twitter. This affords the church a tremendous opportunity to engage the young adults and youth and learn their thoughts toward religion and their desires for ministries in their context.

In an article entitled, “Digital Tool Kit Collects Resources for Young Adult Ministry”, writer Zoe Ryan asks the question, “Young adults in the Catholic Church; where are they? You could say they are all over the place some are regular Mass attendees, some are away from home, some do not attend Mass, some are mothers, some are in the military, some are entering their third job, some are entering their first job, and some are in college. It is a difficult demographic to minister to; it encapsulates so many

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<sup>5</sup>Jarrett Washington, “Digital Age and Dirt Roads, 1982-Present” (Lecture, Greater Target AME Church, Holly Hill, SC, September 20, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



life stages. Ministers looking for an effective tool to minister are trying out Young Adult Ministry in a Box, a digital resource tool kit for ministering to young adults, created in conjunction with Busted Halo Ministries, a Paulist ministry reaching out to young adult Catholics, and the Washington, D. C. based National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association.”<sup>7</sup>

“Young adult ministry in the American church is sort of the stepchild that does not get a lot of attention,” Busted Halo executive director Dave Dwyer said. Not to say it is totally neglected; organizations have created programs in the past, Dwyer said. But Young Adult Ministry in a box, released in February, is moving the curriculum from physical three-ring binder on the shelf to a digital tool kit.”<sup>8</sup>

Amy Frykholm wrote in her article entitled, “What’s Happening to Church Membership: Loose Connections”, that despite the changing patterns of church affiliation, most churches still approach membership the way they did in the 1960s. New attendees are encouraged to attend a class to learn about the history and theology of the denomination and of the local congregation with the expectation that they will join the church. But if new modes of affiliation are appearing, churches will need new ways of thinking about membership.<sup>9</sup>

Frykholm cites an Episcopal Bishop in Washington State who thinks that churches do not yet know how to measure what this means.

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<sup>7</sup>Zoe Ryan, “Digital Tool Kit Collects Resources for Young Adult Ministry,” National Catholic Report, <http://ncronline.Org/news/digital-tool-kit-collects-resources-young-adult-ministry> (accessed August 27, 2017).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Amy Frykholm, “What’s Happening to Church Membership?: Loose Connection,” *Christian Century* (May 31, 2011): 21.

What denominational metrics people are asking, how many people are in church on Sunday, for example, may not be the right measure for today. The measure that contemporary churches need may be more intuitive and more spiritual in nature.<sup>10</sup>

The Episcopal Bishop goes further to say, we have only been paying attention to the people who stay. But maybe that is not the purpose (of base camps). Maybe we have been treating base camps as permanent residences. In order to operate as base camps, congregations need not give up their identity or cease offering a challenging “rule for living.” In fact, he said, young adults are eager for such a challenge. But churches need to be able to witness to the gospel when they have only a few chances to reach one person.<sup>11</sup>

The author is in agreement with Amy Frykholm that churches, particularly in the context of the setting where the author currently serves. Greater Macedonia is still attempting to maintain membership by using the same approach used back in the 1960s. During the 1960s the Civil Rights movement was very much alive and played an important role in the church’s membership increase because churches were instrumental in providing accommodations for holding meetings and training. People then joined the church because it provided them a sense of belonging and pride. The church likewise used the opportunities to provide classes on denominational history and theology, which instilled a sense of pride in the members. Greater Macedonia like other churches (Black churches) membership grew through this concept.

However, the young adults and youth today know the Civil Rights movement mainly through a historical context and not through experience. Therefore, the pride that accompanied the classes offered back in the 1960s is no longer relevant to this group

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 23.

under thirty-nine years old. Their lack of knowledge of that time period means they do not place the same significance on church membership and it does not appeal to their sense of appreciation of denominational history and theology. Since denominational pride and an appreciation for the role the family churches played in the past is not relevant to the church's struggle to survive today, then other options must be started to generate ministries to serve their needs.

In the article, "Introducing Newcomers to the Culture" in *Studying Congregations*, the authors says, "No congregation can count on its current members to last forever, nor can it count on a guaranteed pool of potential members from its community or even from its own progeny".<sup>12</sup>

Further, in *Studying Congregations*, Arlin Rothauge identifies differences in member's assimilation and community building among the family church (up to fifty active members), pastoral church (fifty to one hundred and fifty members), program church (one hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty members), and corporate church (three hundred and fifty plus).<sup>13</sup> The author does believe that the sizes of the congregation matters to the young adults and youth in Greater Macedonia's context and in other congregations.

They still want ministries that attract them in the church where they attend and are relevant to their concerns and address the issues that affect them.

Lovett H. Weems, Jr. says in *Take the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change* that in the Church, whenever a new child is born into a family, there is great joy.

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<sup>12</sup>Nancy Ammerman, et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 89.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

At that moment all the hopes, dreams, and love of an extended family surround the new life. Part of the joy at the birth is that this new child represents the next generation of family heritage. Our hopes for this baby are not merely to repeat the lives of past family members. We obviously do not anticipate that this new child will emulate the bad parts the family tradition that all families have. No, at the moment of new life, a family wants this child to share a rich family heritage, but they also want this child to advance the plot of the family story. The goal is for the child to have all the resources of heritage as a foundation, and to develop in distinctive and new ways. So it is with a congregation.<sup>14</sup>

Bearing in mind Lovett's comments, our young adults and youth in the church should be seen as the new child in the family. The church needs this group to operate so they would share and maintain the church's heritage. The church also should develop distinctive and new ways of operating by starting new ministries. Rather than simply emulating the past bad habits of the church, the young adults and youth present the opportunity to advance the church forward into the future.

Many writers have weighed in on the importance of young adults and youth's involvement in churches to ensure their participation and preserve the survival of the congregation in the future.

Most of the writers in this area seem to agree that there is indeed a problem with the churches not scheduling enough time, efforts, or resources on the young adults and youth ministries in their settings. Those writers made it clear that for this to take place ministries designated for the young adults and youth must be established and supported.

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<sup>14</sup>Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Take the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 69-70.

It is also clear that everyone involved must be committed to endorse changes in their particular setting and be supportive of the long range goals of these ministries for the young adults and youth of the churches.

Every day that the churches and its leaders show reluctance or continued resistance to engage and address the problem of declining church membership and attendance by the young adults and youth of the church that are a part of the mainstream denomination, the problem will continue to intensify until it reaches a critical level.

On the other hand, there are people with the opinion that a problem does not exist in reference to young adults and youth that are opting to leave the church of the major historical denominations. In an article entitled, “Reaching Out to Young Adults Will Screw Up Your Church”, writer Adam J. Copeland says, “While many churches say, we want young people, they really do not. If young adults actually showed up and joined their church for good, the change they would naturally bring with them would be stark, even off-putting. In fact, making a congregation welcoming to young adults necessarily means it will become less comfortable for the current members.”<sup>15</sup>

Copeland goes on to write, as many noted about young adults today, we tend to seek belonging first; believing comes later. Welcoming young adults that fit the perfect church visitor mold is easy.

You know the type church members long for: some magical newcomer who was raised in a perfect household, is married (not divorced), has a few kids, enjoys his well-paying job, and, of course, has orthodox unquestioning beliefs. Fewer and fewer young adults fit this image (if anyone ever did). To welcome young adults, churches need to

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<sup>15</sup>Adam J. Copeland, “Reaching Out to Young Adults will Screw up Your Church.” <http://www.adamjcopeland.com/2012/05/24> (accessed May 24, 2012).

make places where we can belong and then believe. To welcome young adults these days' churches need to welcome the atheist, the single mom, the tattooed, the unemployed, and the same sex couple.<sup>16</sup>

In a similar article entitled, "Is There A Church Mutiny Afoot", author Josh Loveless writes, "I have been leading a rebellion, and chances are, you have been part of it. Sure, you are not participating in my particular branch of this rebellion, but each week, hundreds of thousands gather together under this banner of mutiny. And they do so to worship God. I have been leading a 20s/young adult/college ministry, whatever it is you want to call these ministries that are launched with a separate worship service, under blessing of their church. But I have realized that at the core, these services are birthed out of rebellion. The attitude is rarely named. We prefer to cloak it, to explain it away as a simple difference in musical tastes, or as an aversion to getting up early on Sundays. But let us call it what it is. Rebellion, Mutiny."<sup>17</sup>

Loveless goes on to say, the truth is, many of us who represent younger generations have been hungry for a church experience different than the one we were raised in.

Historically, younger generations have always been the lookout. They have sat atop the masthead on the ship, trying to describe to the captain below what is happening in culture, both the good and the bad. Younger generations have an intuitive understanding of where we are headed long before anyone else.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Josh Loveless, "Is There a Church Mutiny Afoot," Relevant Magazines, <http://relevantmagazine.com/god/church/features/20702-church-mutiny.com> (accessed March 1, 2010).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Loveless says fear is often at the root of this broken relationship between generations. I have heard elders in leadership confess to fear of change, fear of not being able to execute new ideas, fear of disrupting the way things have always been done, fear of what church people think. Whenever fear is present, control becomes the way we respond. And because older generations of men hold the power card in most churches, nothing will change until control and fear are surrendered.<sup>19</sup>

Loveless states that, if you are going to rebel, it is pretty important to make sure it is against the institution of church and not the dream of God known as the church. For the first time in history, we have five generations alive at the same time. Imagine what that might look like if members of each generation were invited to a seat at the table, to teach one another about theology and ecclesiology. It is time for us to tell a new story about how we as the Church are seeking to build the Kingdom of God. And this new story for us is obviously taken from the old story. If you are a young person trying to figure out how to best contribute who you are to the mission of God, the author ask you to consider doing it in a way that honors the beautiful dream God had given the Church.

A dream that included the old and the young bringing their God-given design into relationships with one another for the glory of God and for the redemption of the world.<sup>20</sup>

In yet another article entitled, “The Church’s Doomed Pursuit of the Elusive Young Adult”, author Josh Loveless writes, “It seems that everywhere you look today, the church, especially within historic traditions, is talking about reaching that ever-elusive young adult demographic. Sometimes it feels like we are on some National

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Geographic safari trying to observe some rare creature, but all-in-all the author thinks it is a great endeavor and worth the effort.”

At the same time, the author is also worried that in our excitement about new ministries, creative initiatives and renewed energy focused on young adults that are doomed even before we begin.<sup>21</sup>

Reyes-Chow says further, “As I reflect on my own stage of ministry, after twenty five years of working in the church including seventeen years of ordained ministry, I am keenly aware of my short-comings when it comes to reaching young adults. My Gen X worldview and ecclesiastic experience often cloud my judgment and my aversion to getting old can be a stumbling block to my own continued growth in ministry. I think the church, as a living body is not much different in our current stage of life. Over the generations, what the church has done in the world has been amazing and powerful, but those resting on the laurels of those accomplishments often hamper our ability to see the church of the future; one that could have the same impact on the world.”

So before we journey too far down the path of our young adults’ expedition, the author would offer three faulty assumptions that many of us make when thinking about young adults and the future of the church.<sup>22</sup>

Reyes-Chow stated that those three faulty assumptions are. (1) We can build a ministry for young adults; (2) There is such a thing as A Young Adult. (3) Young Adults will help the church I love to live.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Bruce Reyes-Chow, “The Church’s Doomed Pursuit of the Elusive Young Adult,” Red Letter Christians, <http://www.redletterchristians.org/the-churchs-doomed-pursuit-of-the-elusive-young-adult> (accessed August 24, 2012).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.



Under his first faulty assumption Reyes-Chow says, the author finds it interesting that most of the conversations about reaching young adults take place among people who are distinctly not young adults. He thinks that it is a way that many people try to prove that forty really is the new twenty and extend our youth for as long as we can. If we are to reach young adults with integrity, then young adults must be at the table and part of the direction setting in significant ways. Much like we would never plant a Korean American church with a team that was ninety percent non-Korean, we must not try to create relevant young adults ministries by relying on the musings of even the best intentioned forty, fifty and sixty year-olds. For as hip of a forty three year-old as the author may fool himself into believing the author does not and will not experience the world through the eyes of a twenty year old, and there is nothing the author can do to change that. The best thing one can do is to acknowledge this reality and then find the best ways to empower, guide and support that twenty year old as she/he discovers a place and role in the future of the church.

This posture must be taken in all aspects of the journey: planning process, fiscal management, organizational development, etc. if we are to truly create and sustain ministry with and for young adults.<sup>24</sup>

In Reyes-Chow's second assumption he says, "There is such a thing as a young adult; one of the glaring generational differences that seems to take over young adult conversations is the idea that there is *A Young Adult* that can be defined and targeted. Sure, there are ways that we can glean some common young adult characteristics, but unlike previous generations, these definitions are far more descriptive than prescriptive. One can hear it now, we boomers are not all the same, how dare you, you disrespected

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Gen X'er! Fair enough, but on this we will have to agree to disagree". The author is not saying that previous generations are soulless robots programmed to all like the same things, but the author thinks it is fair to say that in previous generational times more people liked the same whereas in our today's niche culture, more people like more things. This diversity within a demographic throws our tried and true methodological approach to ministry all into a tizzy because it means that we will have to deal with diverse expressions of faith. How do we measure and assess these things? How do we fund them? What kind of leadership is needed? All-important questions that can only be effectively addressed by taking seriously assumption one.<sup>25</sup>

In Reyes-Chow's third assumption, young adults will help the church we love to live on, he says, "If we are honest, the main reason most of us are hopping on the young adult train is because we think we need them to survive and sustain the church that we have been a part of.

To some extent that is true and noble if we are thinking about *the church* as a way of being and not a style, ideology or program. However, if reaching young adults is only, even mostly, about self-preservation, we have already chosen a path of death without hope for resurrection. On the other hand, if we are about seeing the end of the particular manifestation of the church as a natural life stage and rhythm of life, then we can move into our death strengthened by the promise of resurrection and new life. Yes, some aspects of the church past are destined to continue in some fashion, but if our primary

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

reason for reaching young adults is to preserve what has always been, then we have already stopped being a church worth preserving at all.<sup>26</sup>

As we can see there are experts in the area of young adults and youth ministries that hold the position that it is not completely clear that there is a pressing need for churches to place so much emphasis on developing ministries solely design to attract young adults and youth back to the mainline denominational churches.

Several of the writer concluded that it does not benefit the church to undertake this task. The school of thought appears to be that they believe that it is more beneficial to the church if the young adults and youth adjust to the current ministries that were also used in the past.

Although the writers made some valid points in expressing their oppositions to having so much focus placed on young adults and youth ministries, the author still believes that there is inadequate emphasis applied to them. He author wholeheartedly believe that there is always more that can be offered to that ministry.

Is there a correct position? If there is then which of the writers are correct? Much about developing new ministries for young adults and youth has to do with context. It is widely believe that what works well in one particular context probably with not work in another context. But the writer believes that addressing the problem of absence of young adults and youth in the church with ministries designed just for that group will not only survive but it will excel in all contexts in which it is applied.

New ministries developed for young adults and youth is about reaching the age group in the church and offering the opportunity for them to serve God. In an article entitled, "Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

Adults”, written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, writes that the goals with young adults are; (1) To connect young adults with Jesus Christ. Objectives: Spiritual formation and direction based on personal relationship with Jesus; religious education and formation to help young adults appreciate the Church’s teachings and traditions; vocation discernment; (2) To connect young adults with the church. Objectives: Evangelizing outreach where young adults gather/forming the faith community by inviting young adults to participate in Church life; pastoral care that responds to the spiritual and developmental needs of young adults; (3) To connect young adults with the mission of the Church in the world. Objectives: Conscience formation based on the Gospel and on Church teaching; providing educational and service opportunities to practice gospel values; developing leaders for society and Church life; (4) To connect young adults with a peer community. Objective: To form faith communities of peers; to develop peer leadership; to identify young adult teams in parishes, organizations and on college campuses.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults,” Young Adult Ministry in the Archdiocese of Seattle, <http://www.seattleoym.org/programs/young-adult-ministry> (accessed 1996).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

In a group of Prophetic Preaching and Praxis the writer finds an issue that has a slow, methodical, and negative affect on his context. The writer, Pastor Lawrence Gordon serves as the Senior Pastor at Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Pastor Gordon has served there since September 2010. The church is located in the downtown area on the edge of a historic district, surrounded by restaurants, a mini shopping center, and business offices. The church is located within walking distance to the South Carolina State Ports Authority, several major shipping terminals and is within the major tourist attraction area in Charleston.

The issue that Pastor Gordon is confronted with is that the young adults and youth are opting to leave the church where they were baptized and served much of their young lives. He has a concern because this select group is electing to depart rather than remain in the setting where their parents and grandparents worship. There is no longer a sense of loyalty to this church by many of the young adults and youth.

Pastor Gordon believes that in order to reverse this trend reformation must take place. The prophets' call for the people to return to God comes with a prophetic injunction to bear witness with the word of God that they are loved, valued, appreciated and are a part of the body of Christ. However, at the root of the issue exist several factors:

1) Young adults and youth are not well received by the older members: 2) Young adults

and youth are not treated equally; 3) Young adults and youth are not given ample opportunities to fully participate in every aspect of the church; 4) And, ministries are not age level relevant. There is a need to frame congregation's mindset and hearts to engage in inclusive ministry. This allows the local congregation to give attention to the seriousness of losing the young adult and youth members and the future crisis the local church will face. This process will include spiritual research within, and prophetic and praxis preaching on relevant subjects reaching cross-generational section of the membership. It is ministry engaged at the core of repairing relationships divided by generational cultures.

This project will seek to speak to the older adult members of Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church to change the way they have been conducting the operations of the church. At the forefront of this change is that older members must invite young adult members and youth into the ministries. Additionally, the young adult and youth members must be allowed to voice their opinions as to how the church worship experience would be relevant to their expectations.

### **Biblical Foundation**

The Old Testament is full of stories of children and young adults, who God called into leadership positions to serve the present age. These stories incorporate the life and experiences of the people of the covenant community. Our faith community today can learn much from the life of the people of faith and how they adapted to the leadership of young people.

Congregations are able to grow by making an effort to retain the youth and young adult members, respecting their contributions, and encouraging their participation in

shaping the future of the church. Our youth and young adults offer congregations the opportunity to experience fresh ideas and as a result implement more diversity into the worship experience and within the business operation of the church.

There is an old saying that “Children should be seen and not heard.” This is translated to mean that children should be quiet and remain in the shadows. Probably as much as any place in society in the past this has been true within the faith community. Traditionally the elders of the tribes of Israel played the key role of providing community leadership. This action served to develop a high level of expectation among the covenant people of the Bible and the elders were perceivably the only group qualified to function in a leadership position.

However, as the writer explored this section of the Bible in the Old Testament, he is able to highlight several of the narrative stories that will be recalled to illustrate that God selected youthful men and women to provide leadership to the people of Israel. The narratives will perhaps show that the elders’ role included them, in an effort to make available the opportunity for the young persons to receive training (on the job training) in preparation of the leadership over the tribes and allow a period of transition.

The primary Old Testament text first shows the people of God disregarding the young person selected by God as a future leader of Israel. They looked for someone that fit their idea of a leader, basically by physical stature.

The text comes from 1 Samuel 16:11-13.

Samuel said to Jesse, “Are there all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one. Then Samuel took

the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.<sup>1</sup>

The text described David as ruddy, had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The New American Commentary says, When David was brought from the field, his favorable physical traits were immediately obvious: he was first of all “ruddy,” either possessing red-tinted hair or a bronze complexion; he possessed “a fine appearance” (“beauty of eyes”); and he was “handsome.” However these physical assets were no proof that David was God’s choice; at best they were irrelevant. What mattered was the young man’s heart, and only God could judge that. The Lord removed all suspense from the situation with his word to Samuel: “Anoint him; he is the one.”<sup>2</sup>

When David, the youngest of the sons in Jesse’s family, was selected as the Lord’s anointed, he joined a venerable crowd of Torah patriarchs selected by God in a way that confounded social norms. Other men who were not firstborn but who were selected by the Lord over their more socially powerful older brothers include Seth, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses, and perhaps Abraham. It seems that the biblical record deliberately creates the impression that Yahweh prefers to use disenfranchised members of society.<sup>3</sup>

This sixteenth chapter of 1 Samuel commences with Samuel’s disappointment with King Saul’s leadership direction and because he anointed him the first king of Israel, his feeling responsible for Saul’s failure. Rather than accepting God’s decision to remove Saul from the position of king of Israel, Samuel grieved over the decision and

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Sm 16:11-13 (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> R. D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel* Vol. 7 (Nashville, TN: Holman Publishers, 1996), 179-180.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 180.



procrastinated with the possibility of a change of heart by God. Saul had been king for so long that the people and even Samuel possessed a level of comfort in his corrupt leadership. The people had come to accept the fact that God chose him and whatever actions he embarked on were acceptable. Saul's ability to lead had deteriorated and he continued to go through the motions. He was ineffective at executing adequate leadership yet the people continued to comply with his authority. In the meantime God had another person in mind to lead Israel while Samuel was spending important time feeling sorry for Saul.

God took responsibility for the decision for removing Saul, telling Samuel that He (God) had rejected him. We make the mistake of continuing to accept leadership that has deteriorated because it is acceptable according to our customs and traditions, however, the leadership fails to meet the people's needs or provide them protection or direction.

God then told Samuel where to go to locate the one He has chosen to be king and to anoint him the next king. The people trembled when Samuel arrived knowing the reason he came and fearing the consequences that may result when Saul was made aware of the purpose of Samuel's visit.

Samuel was looking for Jesse to locate the one God chose and to perform what he was instructed to do by God to locate and anoint the next king. While Samuel was preparing to meet the next king, the elders of the city were more concerned about the nature of his visit. Was it peaceably or not? Would his visit arouse suspicion from King Saul and cause problems for them? Change was on the horizon and they were consumed with Samuel's presence rather than his purpose. The leadership of Saul had become stale

and unsettled and needed to be terminated. Samuel came searching for the one God would lead him to anoint.

The anointing could not have been done openly, for then Saul would have killed David. Its purpose was to give David a chance to train himself for the office. God took David under his care.<sup>4</sup>

More importantly, in this chapter the writer gives the names of Jesse's sons and even a description of some of them. Samuel was shown Eliab, Abinadab, Sammah, and the others down to the one before the youngest. After none of the older sons were accepted by Samuel to be king so he inquired of Jesse whether or not there were any more sons that he had not seen. Samuel was operating under the influence of the Holy Spirit as each son was brought before him. Each of the sons introduced prior to the youngest were rejected. The youngest, David, was not there and was definitely disregarded by everyone except God. He was not large in stature as were his brothers or Israel's first king, King Saul. No mention was made of the vocation or any references about the talents of the older sons of Jesse other than them being warriors. The narrative is careful to point out that, the youngest son was out working as a shepherd, which naturally was an asset to lead as king.

Because we are unable to see a person as God sees them we are not able to make intelligent spiritual decisions concerning leadership qualifications. God, not Samuel selected David to be the future king. If this decision were delegated to people to decide David would have not been selected. But God knows the full potential we possess within as well as in our heart, to lead. Robert Pinsky writes in his book, *The Life of David*, that

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<sup>4</sup>Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 224.

Saul immediately took notice of Eliab. When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

This recalls Samuel identifying the first king, when Saul, the strapping, handsome young country boy, stood above all others from his shoulder and upward. Like Saul, Eliab stands out by his stature and bearing, as in the literal, root sense of the old expression, head and shoulders.<sup>5</sup>

Another Old Testament story, the narrative story of Moses and Joshua demonstrated the well-planned change of leadership that was abrupt but due possibly to years of preparation under Moses' tutorship provided for a smooth transition of leadership. Moses led the Hebrew people from Egypt and throughout their ordeal in the wilderness. He led them in various areas of leadership; military, spiritual, and political. During those years Moses mentored a young understudy named Joshua. Charles Swindoll in his book, *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication* says that Joshua had been personally trained for the task.<sup>6</sup>

The training Joshua received from the years of shadowing Moses, learning his style, observing how he interacted with the people, how he led them in battles, his actions during times that he and the people were victorious and the times they experienced defeats, and how God guided Moses was invaluable to Joshua as he transitioned from the position of apprenticeship to the position of the leader.

The training enabled him to be an effective leader as God empowered him just as He empowered Moses before him. Stephen L. Harris and Robert L. Platzner in *The Old*

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Pinsky, *The Life of David* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 2005), 11.

<sup>6</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1999), 321.

*Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* calls Joshua a small-scale replica of Moses, one whose life experiences parallel those of his mentor.<sup>7</sup>

The first chapter of the Book of Joshua establishes Joshua's leadership as divinely appointed successor to Moses. With Moses' death, God addresses Joshua directly, promising both the land, which He promised to Moses and His divine presence, as He had given to Moses. The commands to be strong and courageous define the mission of Joshua.<sup>8</sup>

Early Jewish tradition credited Joshua with writing the Book of Joshua. Many modern scholars now dispute this. The objection to his authorship is based on the final section, which describes his own death and burial. Joshua could not have written that material. The most logical theory about his authorship is that Joshua wrote a great part, but not all of the book, and certainly not the parts about his death and burial.

The first five chapters of the Book of Joshua demonstrates the implementation of the leadership skills of Joshua learned through his careful study of Moses and his willingness to follow Moses. In Chapter 1:1-15, Joshua replaces Moses, prepares Israel militarily and spiritually, and is confronted during the appearance of the Commander of the Lord. Chapters 6:1 through 12:24 list Joshua's victories and conquests over territories in Canaan.<sup>9</sup> Joshua possessed the unique character of being a trusted leader.

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<sup>7</sup>Stephen L. Harris and Robert L. Platzner, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Los Angeles, CA: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 176.

<sup>8</sup>Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1996), 429.

<sup>9</sup>Ronald F. Young, *Nelson's New Illustrate Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 707.

He made certain that when Israel conquered Jericho that they understood that they were not to harm Rahab or her family, honoring the oath that the spies entered in with her earlier.

In the same manner that Moses trained and prepared Joshua to succeed him as a military and political leader over Israel, Elijah the prophet trained and prepared Elisha to be the spiritual leader over the northern kingdom of Israel.

The narrative story tells of Elijah being directed by the Lord to return through the wilderness to Damascus to anoint Hazael to be the next king of Syria, for Jehu, the son of Nimshi to be the king of Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be the prophet that would replace Elijah. Elijah found Elisha, his understudy and successor plowing the field. Elijah's actions signify the future change of leadership by casting his mantle upon him, placing his robe on him, and throwing his cloak over him.

Elisha arose from plowing in the field and followed Elijah becoming Elijah's servant. After the first encounter with Elijah nothing is mentioned about Elisha until shortly before Elijah's ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire. Elijah was prone to becoming frustrated and slipped into a state of depression. Elisha whom Elijah mentored would be there for him. Charles Swindoll says in *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* that God allowed Elijah to pass his mantle to Elisha, his successor.

But God did more than that, abundantly more. Elisha arose, followed Elijah and ministered to him. God not only gave Elijah a successor, he also gave him a close, personal friend, and someone who loved Elijah and understood him well enough to minister to him and encourage him.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* (Nashville, TN: Word Publisher, 2000), 121.

Elisha succeeded Elijah when Elijah's time on earth was finished and ministered for approximately fifty years in the northern kingdom of Israel, serving as God's prophet during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash. Elisha was sought after and a trusted advisor to kings. He was endeared to the poor and oppressed by providing for them, particularly his assistance to widows such as the one indebted to creditors. He ministered to all people, regardless of their nationalities, including curing the Syrian Naaman.<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, Elisha showed a willingness to succeed Elijah, in spite of the obvious difficulties ahead. Originally a farmer, he gave up his former way of life for the unpopular task of being God's messenger to the hardened and idolatrous people of Israel. Elisha was determined to carry on Elijah's work. He was Elijah's spiritual heir and remained with Elijah to the end to receive the spiritual inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

Another narrative story in the Old Testament is that of Eli and Samuel. Eli was chief priest and chief administer of Israel and would sit outside the tabernacle to give advice and settle disputes.

His sons would normally continue in his position after his death but God rejected them because they were corrupt. Samuel, left by his parents as a young child to be brought into the tabernacle and dedicated a lifetime of service to God, was in line to succeed Eli. He became Eli's helper in all of Eli's duties and functions in the tabernacle.

When God called Samuel, he was still young and did not recognize that it was the voice of God calling him. He did not understand who was calling him and therefore

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<sup>11</sup>Ronald F. Youngblood, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 396.

<sup>12</sup>Don Fleming, *World's Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: World Publishing, 1990), 110.

thought it was Eli. Three times the Lord called and Samuel approached Eli, thinking it was Eli calling. By this time, Eli was nearly blind but still eventually understood it was God calling Samuel and he instructed Samuel to lie back down and how to answer if he hears the call again. The next time, following Eli's advice, Samuel answered God and God spoke to Samuel about the things He would perform.

When Eli died, Samuel succeeded him as chief administer in Israel. People everywhere acknowledged Samuel as a prophet from God and a religious leader of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

The Prophet Jeremiah was even younger than David when he received the call to the Prophetic ministry. Jeremiah's ministry started when he was very young during the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign and lasted about 40 years. However, the call was sanctioned even earlier. God declared that He had sanctioned him to be a prophet before he was born. Jeremiah pleaded that he was young and lacked the ability to speak, but God replied that he was being called upon not because of his age or ability but because God had chosen him.<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah was thrust into the Prophetic ministry as a youth, and though often times during the ministry he was forced to seek safety, he delivered the message dependably in spite of extreme hostility.

Another Old Testament narrative story find relevant in regard to younger men and women groomed and eventually assuming the role of leader is the story of Esther and Mordecai, found in the book of Esther. Esther, a young Jewish girl, was an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, who treated her like his own daughter. Mordecai was carried to

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>14</sup>Youngblood, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 642.

captivity in Babylon and he along with others elected to remain there instead of returning to Jerusalem.

Now there was in the acropolis of Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite; he had been carried away from Jerusalem with the exiles that had been deported with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile. And he reared his cousin Hadassah (Esther, that is) since she had neither father nor mother.<sup>15</sup>

Haman, the king's trusted advisor, despised Esther's cousin Mordecai. Haman's hate for Mordecai drove him to seek opportunity to destroy Mordecai as well as all Jews. The scripture records that Esther was lovely and beautiful. She found favor with the king and as a result, rose from an unknown Jewish woman to the queen that replaced Vashti.

Esther, when given the occasion to use her influence with the king to save Mordecai and the Jews against the scheme of Haman, utilized the opportunity. The story relates that this young woman, Esther, was raised by a cousin, Mordecai, and no doubt taught by him the proud history and tradition, as well as the struggles, of the Jews. When she rose from obscurity to a position of prominence, Mordecai reminded her that the fate of all the Jews in Babylon was connected to her actions. She felt a sense of obligation to initiate action by appealing for an audience with the king to seek relief for her cousin and her people. The king received her and granted her request. Mordecai was a mentor to Esther and as a result she surfaced as an intermediary for the Jews and the king.

As the writer process these Old Testament narrative stories and how the young future leaders were mentored by their elders in preparation for their later leadership, he sees the conclusion from these narratives in the Book of Joel 2:28. In this verse the

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<sup>15</sup>Carey A. Moore, *The Anchor Bible: Esther, Volume 7b* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 15.



prophet summarizes the importance of recognizing concepts of young adults and youth involvement in God's plan for the faith community. "Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."<sup>16</sup> Thus the prophet tells of a change of the guard in regard to leadership of our young people relative to the faith community and the manner in which God will use them to communicate His message.

Stories, such as these we have talked about thus far, were not limited exclusively to the Old Testament in the Bible. Like the narrative stories of the Old Testament, in the New Testament like kernels of popcorn stories are found in the gospel and the letters of young adults and youth having occasions for leadership in ministries.

Like in the Old Testament there were oppositions to youth ministries as well as opportunities for the development of youth movements.

The writer cannot find a more suitable New Testament biblical foundation scripture to lift up young adults and youth's availability for ministry than from the Gospel of John. This gospel differs from the other three gospels in that the others portray mainly what Jesus did and how he taught. John moves beyond the obvious facts of Jesus' life to deeper, more profound meanings. Events and miracles are kept to a minimum in the Gospel of John, and are used as springboards or signs for lengthy discussions that reveal important truths about Christ. John 6:8-11.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people? Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the

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<sup>16</sup>Jo 2:28 (NRSV).

loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.<sup>17</sup>

This feeding miracle story is the only miracle found in all four of the Gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17). On previous occasions, Jesus would withdraw from the crowd to seek rest, prayer and meditation, and to spend time alone with his disciples.

However, on this particular occasion he withdrew to avoid the collision he was about to have with the religious authorities.

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee and into the hills with his disciples. The crowd followed them to the place they selected to find relaxation. Jesus saw the crowd coming and recognized that the people definitely were hungry by this time and he and his disciples expected to provide food for them to eat. At first he tested his disciple Philip's faith by asking him where they would buy food for the people to eat. Philip, a very practical person, basically told Jesus that what they had was not enough for them and certainly not adequate to feed the large crowd assembled. Andrew, Peter's brother pointed out to Jesus that there was a lad in the crowd that had five barley loaves and two little fish. But Andrew's next comment showed his lack of faith also by stating what use are they among so many of us."

William Barclay in, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John volume 1*, says the boy had not much to bring. Barley bread was the cheapest of all bread and was held in contempt. Likewise, the fish were no bigger than sardines. Pickled fish from

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<sup>17</sup>Jn 6:8-11 (NRSV).

Galilee were known all over the Roman Empire and small sardine-like fish swarmed in the Sea of Galilee. They were caught and pickled and made into a kind of savory.<sup>18</sup>

Andrew apparently failed to notice that what was transpiring through his recognition of the young lad having five barley loaves and two fish, was presenting an opportunity for the young lad in the crowd to engage in ministry through the resources in his possession.

Neither the disciples nor the five thousand men in the crowd had anything to offer Jesus for him to use to feed the people.

This passage of the scripture demonstrates the potential for young adults and youth to be available and utilized in ministries once the leaders in the faith community identify them. The disciple Andrew pointed out to Jesus when asked how the crowd was going to be fed that there were limited resources available by means of a lad with five Barley loaves and two fish in the crowd. Once it was pointed out Jesus capitalized by ordering them to be organized and prepared to receive.

However, the young lad had what Jesus needed and willingly shared it. By doing so, the entire crowd assemble were recipients of the young man's ministry. This New Testament story never indicated that the young man resisted or protested relinquishing his meal so the crowd would be fed. Although the story never indicated that he stepped forward voluntarily it does imply that he at some point surrendered the five loaves and two fish to the disciples.

This story is indicative of the reality of the truth that Jesus did not extend the line of questioning any further after Andrew's statement to see if there were alternative

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<sup>18</sup>William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John*, Vol. I, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 202.

measures to be considered in lieu of procuring that which the lad had secured in his possession for his personal meal. He just took what was in the crowd from the young lad and after giving thanks divided it among everybody that were there and still had much leftover.

This New Testament story coming out of the Gospel of John and included in the other gospels reveal several things for us to consider. It shows that youthful age does not eliminate opportunities to engage in ministries. Oftentimes older and seasoned persons of faith will knowingly and unknowingly point you out to others without your input, and whenever you come to a faith base gathering be prepared to surrender your gifts and talents.

Just like the young lad who was simply involving himself with the crowd, perhaps curious about the excitement, and subsequently used for ministry, there are similar New Testament stories about young men that established ministries. The differences from the primary text with the young lad are that in the other stories the young men and women had mentors that gave leadership over their ministries through teaching and personal demonstrations but this young man was just hanging out in the crowd.

One such relationship of mentor and student is Paul and Timothy. Paul trained Timothy for effective ministry but saw him as more than just his student, he called Timothy his son. On at least five occasions in the New Testament Paul referred to Timothy as his son (1 Cor 4:17, 1 Tm 1:2, 1:18, 2 Tm 1:2, 2 Tm 2:1).

It appears that Paul had total confidence in Timothy's ability to perform ministry despite his young age and inexperience. It is evident in the numerous times he would send Timothy to intercede on his behalf and manage conflicts and communicate Paul's

doctrines. Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia, Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica. Paul also left Timothy at Berea and Ephesus and was confined with Paul in Rome.

According to Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary by Ronald F.

Youngblood, Timothy's strongest traits were his sensitivity, affection, and loyalty.<sup>19</sup> Paul was a positive role model for Timothy. He gave Timothy practical advice for a young man in a leadership position. Timothy was an ideal example of young man thrust into a position of responsibility maintained respect for the older and experience teacher, Paul. Timothy was involved in depth in Paul's second missionary journey and joined Paul during the latter part of the third missionary journey after failure in Corinth mainly because of fear from Timothy.

Another example in the New Testament of a young man prepared for leadership in ministry tutored by a mentor is Titus. Titus is another one of Paul's student. Paul wrote to Titus, as he did Timothy giving him practical advice as he engaged in ministry. Titus was the man for these tough tasks. According to Paul, he was dependable (2 Cor 8:17), reliable (2 Cor 7:6), diligent (2 Cor 8:17), and he had a great capacity for human affection (2 Cor 7:13-15). On more than one occasion, Titus calmed a desperate situation using both strength and tact.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, we have the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla. They were Jewish Christians living in Rome until the emperor of Rome Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome. They settled in Corinth, opened their home to Paul, and they

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<sup>19</sup>Nelson, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1253.

<sup>20</sup>John Hayes, *Who Was Who in the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 399.

accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey. However, when Paul left Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla remained there.

In a synagogue in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla came into contact with Apollos, a Jew born in Alexandria. Apollos was a very eloquent person with great knowledge of scriptures. He was very fervent in his teaching, but in his teaching he had no knowledge of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, only the baptism of John. Rather than allowing Apollos to continue to teach with his limited knowledge, Aquila and Priscilla took him on as their ministry project. Apollos was young and passionate in his teachings but lacking the fullness of knowledge of God. This couple showed concern for building up others in the ministry. They opened the scriptures and gave him instructions in detail the way of God.

This is just another example from the Bible of people of the faith community lifting the consciousness of a younger person who is called to ministry. Just like the young adults and youth today need spiritual guidance, the individuals mentioned as mentors provided guidance to the young persons that were called to provide service in ministry. That has been what the faith community has offered to those called to ministry.

### **Theological Foundation**

Theology is the study of God and how the people from a particular culture view their interactions with God. That being said, there are differing views on the subject of theology based on an individuals' embedded theology and interpretation of scriptures according to the individuals' tradition, location, as well as their experiences with God. Some individuals are never able to accept anything other than what they learned in their earliest experience with God, mostly through oral tradition. *The Doctrines of Providence & Revelation: An Introduction to Philosophy and Theology*, edited by Edward L. Smith.

says, is rooted (embedded) in the preaching and practices of the church and its members. It is the implicit theology that Christians live out in their work and daily lives.<sup>21</sup> It is safe to say that theology is initially personal, making it difficult to get people in the faith community to alter their personal views.

However, others that change the context through various manners alter their view and move into the stage of deliberative theology. The changes normally come through moving people away from their normal setting even if it is only a brief period of time.

There has always been the issue of young adults and youth and the manner in which they are accepted into the community of faith based on theology in their particular context. When I was growing up, the adults in my context stressed the point that children should not be seen or heard, that they should remain in the background and remain silent unless they are asked to speak. This hindered the young adults' and youth's opportunities to express their innovative ideas or to offer their opinions. Whenever young adult and youth groups are not allowed to express themselves, it prevents creativity from entering the setting.

The problem arises when they are not taught the things that are needed to develop their theology. Oftentimes questions were viewed as challenges to the older folks' theology and challenges were not tolerated in my context. Challenges from the young adults and youth would result in them being labeled as uncooperative and rebellious.

One of the examples we find in many contexts exacerbating young adults' discouragement is the view portrayed in an old song that we sing in the Black Church. "Give me that old time religion, give me that old time religion, give that old time

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<sup>21</sup>Edward L. Smith, *The Doctrines of Providence & Revelation: An Introduction to Philosophy and Theology*, (2001), 50.

religion, it is good enough for me, it was good enough for my dear mother and it is good enough for me.” Positions like that could create a negative atmosphere and a crippling experience to the young folks’ ability to grow in the church. Hence we find them departing seeking a worship experience more conducive to their expectations of worship and allows them to unpack and afford the opportunities to present suggestions that adds to the richness of worship.

Consequently, realizing this should open us up to revisit our past. Certainly we should not be afraid to revisit our past with an open mind and a willingness to reshape our theological positions as we expand our knowledge of God. In other words, did we drop the ball at some point as we introduced our young people to God and educated our young people about God, by finding it unacceptable when they stretch their minds and challenge the past? It would be a travesty if we encouraged education and then turn right around and deny or discourage the ability for the young adults and youth to think and ask questions.

Once we discover that we are contributors to the disinterest of our young people within church community, we must not only accept responsibility but be willing to exercise due diligence by applying in necessary changes in our context.

Thus, the writer is exploring what is said theologically on this issue to find that which will be useful to address his present context at Greater Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

First, let us explore this wonderful biblical theological pericope, found in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 6:4-6, that relates to our responsibilities to our children in preparing them for future service to God.



Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk to them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.<sup>22</sup>

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* says they are adumbrated in the Shema of 6:4-5, the confessional fulcrum of Old Testament faith that defines Yahweh as the unique Sovereign and reduces Israel's obligation to him to one of exclusive love, that is, obedience. The whole purpose of the collection of stipulation is, in fact, to set forth application of the principles of the Ten Words and the Shema as an expression of the fundamental duty of the servant people.<sup>23</sup>

The theological importance in the Shema creates an atmosphere whereas young adults' preparation for service is directly linked with having had proper communication between the father and his children which transcends into a proper relationship between the children and God.

However, the failure to communicate from the fathers to young adults and youth concerning the covenant relationship that the patriarchs established with God and the fulfilled promises kept by God as a result of the covenant relationship have a direct impact on the manner in which young adults develop, nurture, and maintain their relationship with God.

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<sup>22</sup>*Life Application Bible, New International Translation* (Chicago, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1983).

<sup>23</sup>Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakers Books, 1996), 173.

That was so essential to Israel's survival that Moses placed emphasis to the fathers in Israel that on every occasion the fathers were reminded to engage in this conversation with their children. The reason that the communication was required was that it helped to keep the young people current and aware of the providential and protective ability of God towards Israel as she faced dangerous engagement daily with her enemies.

In the Shema (Hear, O Israel), the children hear God's call to His people, given by Moses, to first give their attention to God. Moses proceeded to remind them that there is only one God and He is to be loved wholeheartedly and completely. Throughout their journey to the Promised-Land they encountered different people that practiced different religions and various forms of worship. The different religions and forms of worship had also on occasion drawn them away from God and to serve other gods.

They are instructed to keep the commandments in their hearts and to talk about it to their children at every opportunity. The constant reminder of the things God commanded them to obey served as preventive measures for them to avoid the possibility of them drawing away from God and serving other gods.

Most of us in the Black family were told stories by our older relatives of their past experiences and the ones passed down to them that they thought were important to share and for us to remember. Many times, the stories became boring because we heard them repeatedly while growing up. However, later in life those stories we remember became beneficial in assisting us when faced with critical issues that require theological and complex answers. Many of us drew back from them and realized that they contained vital theological information.

The writer Alex Haley captivated the international faith and non-faith community with his book *Roots*. He was able to research his family's history and capture a connection to his ancestors that went completely back to Africa. He did this by simply giving his attention to the stories passed down through the years via oral tradition that emphasized that it not be forgotten.

Likewise, Moses instructed Israel to make it a practice at every opportunity that the fathers are to teach, talk about, and continuously remind the children to keep God's commandments. They were told to use every available opportunity to iterate and reiterate to their children to keep the commandments.

Another Biblical Theological piece applicable to the subject of young adults and youth in service is found in Isaiah 11:6;

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.<sup>24</sup>

In the faith community this task is difficult to accept because most leaders in place resist changes and are in denial that problems exist. The church is overwhelmed with different theological positions but those different positions will unite together for a common cause if it involves rejecting young adults' leadership. Yet in this biblical theological pericope it says that a child shall lead them.

The result of this kind of leadership will be peace not merely the cessation of hostilities but the unification of that which was formerly divided. The imagery used to convey this point in 11:6-9 has captured thinkers and artists across centuries. Isaiah

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<sup>24</sup>*The New Bible, The NIB Translation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

depicts the very opposites of aggressiveness and helplessness living together in harmony.<sup>25</sup>

Biblical theology in Isaiah comes from the Deutero-Isaiah tradition upon which it deals with the creation from Yahweh. In this tradition, Yahweh powers in creation subjugate confusion and transformed the world to a condition of tranquility. If Yahweh has such power then He certainly can transform the nature of the creatures and have a child to lead them. Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, volume II* writes, because Yahweh had the power to subdue chaos, appeal could also be made to him to help his people in times of tribulation in the historical realm; and because Yahweh created the ends of the earth, the message which he is now sending to Israel is also trustworthy.<sup>26</sup>

Young adult leadership was not only provided for through biblical theology found in the scriptures but through forms of theology as well. The faith community in its infancy was left with many unanswered questions that the leaders were unable to locate references to in the bible. The unanswered questions posed a strain on the survival of the believers as searches were conducted for resolutions and guidance in order to give instructions to the members of the faith community.

The unresolved issues confronting the body of believers led to councils and other gatherings which resulted in the drafting and dispersing of written documents such as creeds. It also developed new ideas, concepts, and new individuals. The contributions of

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<sup>25</sup>John N. Oswalt. *The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2003), 188.

<sup>26</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology vol. II* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 240.

many of our renowned theologians that left a lasting impression on the faith community as their theological discoveries were shared and refined under mentors.

One such young man whose theological position was shaped under the instruction of one of his professors is Martin Luther. Martin Luther, the great religious reformer, who posted the Ninety-five Theses, was mentored by John von Staupitz. The Ninety-five Theses was originally intended for another purpose which never happened. The published theses was the result of him reaching a point in his life where he came to an understanding of penitence, which led him to write against indulgences which is a practice in the Catholic Church. However he decided to publish them as an explanation to clarify their purpose. The letter he sent out requested John von Staupitz to forward the documents to Rome. In the letter he expressed appreciation to John von Staupitz for his help in Luther's internal battle in understanding penitence. John von Staupitz was instrumental in helping Luther develop his deliberative theology.

Probably as much as any theologian, Luther has influenced the church as we know it today. He displayed courage to stand up to the Roman Catholic Church's authorities and spoke out against indulgences. Indulgences were a practice in the Roman Catholic Church that allowed the officials to collect funds from members and in return the priests would pray for the contributors' deceased relatives so that they may be released from Hades.

The Roman Catholics believed that the deceased were stuck there until they were released. Luther's objection to indulgences and the posting of his Ninety-five Theses led the Protestant Reformation movement that changed the monopoly the Catholic Church

occupied over the Christian church and more importantly offered an option to religion to those that could not afford to pay the indulgences.

This young, bright and famous theologian and leader of the Protestant church owed much of his success to John von Staupitz who took the time to mentor him and challenged him to stretch his mind.

Luther in turn took advantage of the opportunity to make a difference. He stood by his convictions even in spite of the threats he received from the Catholic Church.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism based his understanding of theology on Anglican theology where he initially started. John Wesley's father was an Anglican priest and both his paternal and maternal grandfathers were Puritan clergymen as well. It would be a mistake to disregard his father's influence in shaping John's theological ideas that he adopted in life. There is little doubt that his father and mother greatly influenced his theology.

However, it was John's mother, Susanna Wesley that played a pivotal role in formulating John's theology. Mark Ellingsen says in *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History, Volume 2*, his mother's piety and spiritual roots bear witness that a Puritan influence was still very much in the air in late seventeenth-century England. Albeit not formally trained, Susanna Wesley was quite a learned theologian in her own right. Her children, including spiritual advice even in adulthood.<sup>27</sup>

Another influence in Wesley's theological perspective was the time spent with Moravian missionaries on his first voyage to America and the counseling he received from the Moravian preacher Peter Bohler after his return to England. Wesley struggled

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<sup>27</sup>Mark Ellingsen. *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Introduction to Church History, Volume 2*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999). 183.

with the uncertainty of whether or not he had saving faith until 738, when he experienced a strange, warm feeling in his heart. Wesley did not waste his time debating the Trinity, but was assured of the action of God. His theology practiced in Methodism which lists only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Methodist theology was both Practical and Social theology. Though Methodist theology places holiness and perfection of the gospel at the top of its agenda, it has always promoted social justice, addressing issues such as poverty, racism and sexism. Wesley himself condemned slavery and American Methodists included a prohibition against it in its discipline as early as 1789, the only major denomination to make abolition an article of faith.<sup>28</sup>

The theological perspective forwarded by John Wesley, the father of Methodism, one of the major Christian Denominations in the world, respected and practiced worldwide was framed as he as a child was influenced by his Puritan clergy grandfathers, Anglican priest father, and remarkable mother. His theology was also influenced by his membership in the *Holy Club* that he and his brother Charles formed with other young university students at Oxford University.

Daniel Alexander Payne's theology involved education. He was orphaned at an early age when his mother died, which was five years after the death of his father.

Payne's earliest and vague memories of his father are of him teaching young Daniel the alphabet. At the age of eighteen, the young Daniel Payne attended a revival, held by the Methodist Episcopal Church. At this revival, he converted and "instantly felt that peace which passeth all understanding and that joy which is unspeakable and full of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 193.

glory.” Weeks later while praying, he heard a voice from within say “I have set thee apart to educate thyself in order that thou mayest be an educator to thy people.”<sup>29</sup> Payne then self-taught himself and learned as much as he could while growing up in Charleston, South Carolina and eventually opened a school where he taught slaves which he loved to do.

But his teaching was abruptly ended because of racial oppression and laws enacted by the state’s legislation prohibiting the teaching of slaves. The inability to teach, which was his passion, left him distraught, bitter and angry with God. His attitude changed quickly when he had a dream of himself flying north in his robe and teaching.

He left the south and went to New York seeking a theological education. There he learned about Samuel Schmucker and his position on the issue of slavery. Payne accepted an offer to attend Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary where Samuel Schmucker was the president. He became very close to President Schmucker and regarded him as a father figure.

Payne in keeping with his passion to educate worked hard in the community teaching in the town’s African Americans communities. He also spent time with the young people of the community giving them religious instructions and holding revivals meetings.

Samuel Schmucker played a pivotal role in shaping the theological position of Daniel Alexander Payne. Schmucker, a Lutheran minister and founder of Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary was responsible for advising Payne to join the African Methodist

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<sup>29</sup>James Judge, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” Gettysburg Public Library, [http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/gettdigital/hidden/judge\\_paper.pdf](http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/gettdigital/hidden/judge_paper.pdf) (July 30,2012).



Episcopal Church. Schmucker recognized that Payne although ordained in the Lutheran Church would not be given an opportunity to pastor in the church.

Payne experienced resistance from many of the pastors in the African Methodist Episcopal Church because they did not accept the need for education. Yet Payne continued to push to educate African Americans and eventually formed Wilberforce University in Ohio.

Payne's theology has several segments. Education is at the top of his theological perspective centered on Wilberforce University. Second, aligned with the heritage of Richard Allen, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and social action, Payne's beliefs included practical, Black, and liberation theology, finally, because of the great influence of Schmucker and the Lutheran Church, Payne's theology is deeply ingrained in the Puritan thoughts and ideals.

The other aspect of Payne's thought is the way in which he tends to reflect Puritans emphases on discipline, industry, thrift, and duties of religion.<sup>30</sup>

Payne, who was mentored by an older Lutheran minister from the north and champion of education in the African American community and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, contributed greatly as an early advocate of education as a means of liberation for Blacks in America.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while studying at the University of Berlin was stirred by his probe of Martin Luther. But it was Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian that was teaching in Germany, whose writings greatly influenced Bonhoeffer. He adopted Barth's

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<sup>30</sup>Mark Ellingsen. *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Introduction to Church History, Volume 2*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 217.

existentialist theological perspective. Barth believed in the theology of grace through Jesus Christ and supported by the scripture.

Bonhoeffer practiced liberation theology even as a very young adult. He engaged in political activities in opposition to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. He was arrested in 1943 by the Gestapo after his political activities were uncovered. In February 1945, Bonhoeffer was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp and finally to Flossenbug concentration camp. It was there, on April 9, 1945 (shortly before the end of World War II), that he and other resistance fighters were condemned and executed on Hitler's order.

Bonhoeffer did on occasions disagreed with Barth on theological issues concerning liberal theology and Barth's position on freedom and the world.

Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer after meeting Barth in 1931 was impressed with his writings and they joined forces in opposition against the Germans' tactic that incorporated theology that attempted to integrate Christianity and Nazism.

Barth's influence of Bonhoeffer existentialist theology is applied in Bonhoeffer approach to life. In his quest to eliminate Nazism in Germany liberation theology is applied in that he gave up an opportunity to get married and eventually after imprisonment loss his life seeking social justice.

Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr., a civil rights champion practiced liberation and Black theology. Doctor King's theology could be traced back to Stockbridge, Georgia, where his father was born and experienced racial oppression. Martin Luther King, Sr.'s father was a sharecropper and was often cheated by the white farmer he worked for. His son would see this and dangerously speak out about it.

Martin Luther King Sr. developed a passion for social justice because of his early encounter with unequal treatment of blacks. The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. grew up watching his father rendering a life of service dedicated to helping people in need as a respected pastor and community leader.

Members of his congregation and other citizens with problems were always coming to Daddy King for assistance, whether finding a job, or for temporary housing. Sometimes it was for trouble with school authorities, the police, or lending institutions.<sup>31</sup>

Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. was also one that believed that education was the key to advancement and for blacks to be homeowners.

Not only was the young King's father an advocate of social and economic justice but his mother's father the Reverend A. D. Williams, the Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church before the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. was the Pastor was also the first President of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s theology of love and service was naturally shaped within the home that he was raised. His father refused to hate his enemies and taught that to his children and grandchildren. This concept of love influenced his leadership in the civil rights movement and remained with Martin, Jr. throughout his short life.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was also influenced by noted theologians. In a manner like Schleiermacher, he referred to Jesus' unique God-consciousness (Letter from a Birmingham Jail). However, King became influenced also by Reinhold Niebuhr's

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<sup>31</sup>Clayton Riley, *Daddy King: An Autobiography The Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr.* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980), 10.

political realism and the Augustinian understanding of sin to endorse liberalism's optimistic view of persons.<sup>32</sup>

King also was influenced theologically by the existentialist theologian Paul Tillich. However, one person that influenced him and shaped his determination to achieve his goal by nonviolence was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi organized India's movement for independence against the British utilizing a peaceful form of boycotts.

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a larger scale. For Gandhi love was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation.<sup>33</sup>

Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. after intense study of Gandhi's nonviolent method of boycotting adopted the same method during the years that he led the civil rights movement. There were occasions that others involved in the movement attempted to convince Doctor King to change tactics and disband his nonviolent philosophy and resort to violence to neutralize the racial opposition that were using violence against protesters.

Doctor King, who was very young when he took over leadership of the civil rights movement applied all of the different theologies he learned from his father, other noted, historical figures, forerunners in theology, and the nonviolence concept of Mahatma Gandhi to champion the cause of leading black American in demanding equal opportunity and social justice.

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<sup>32</sup>Mark Ellingsen. *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Introduction to Church History, Volume 2*. (Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International, 1999), 362.

<sup>33</sup>Flip Schulke, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Documentary... Montgomery to Memphis with an Introduction by Coretta Scott King* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), 32.

The different areas of theology used throughout this paper concerning our young adults who have excelled because of the application of the concepts adopted from the mentors lead to one theology, practical theology. Practical theology seeks means to understand and address the hurts of the young adults in the main stream denominations that are driving them to non-traditional churches.

Practical theology seeks to address the practical needs of youth. Practical theology connects the young adults, youth, parents, family members, church and community together with the goal of identifying those issues that create dilemmas causing the gap between the older and younger generation. Practical theology includes brainstorming to resolve contemporary issues.

### **Historical Foundation**

The temptation exists to relate the history of the church exclusively to the New Testament. Particularly attaching the history to the book of Acts in the second chapter and centered within the setting in the streets of Jerusalem, is the biblical story of Pentecost. However, tracing the church and incorporating the participation of young adults leads the writer to the Old Testament stories and the creation of the Jewish people that starts with Abram, later called Abraham. The church evolved from God calling an individual to step out on faith and respond to his direction.

After dealing with humankind in general and being disappointed based on their actions, God then turned his focus to establishing the church by selecting a designated people to comply with his commandments beginning with one individual, a man named Abram. God told Abram to depart from his homeland and go to a place that he would direct him. Now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and

your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.<sup>34</sup>

He left Ur with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions and the persons they had attained and set out on an uncharted journey based entirely on faith.

Abram was comfortable with his life in city of Ur. It was the habitats of his father, who was a wealthy man living with-in a city known at that time for its culture and trade status. Anne Graham Lotz said, Ur was not only familiar to Abraham, Ur was a habit. To my knowledge he had never known anything else. Yet when God called him out of that familiar place, Abraham leaped to obey, making the choice to take steps that began a journey that lasted a lifetime.<sup>35</sup> God needed Abram to leave Ur because with all that it had going on it was a place where the people, including Abram's father Terah, worshipped idols. God called, Abram responded to the call, and journeyed to a place unknown to him.

God led Abram away to establish through him a people that would relinquish their beliefs in other deity, pledge their loyalty to one God, and would practice monotheism. Rather than establishing it all through Abram, though he was the starting point, God later told Abram that through his descendants he would make him a great nation. Now called Abraham, he waited sometimes impatiently on God for an heir. Years after he was given the promise, God finally gave Abraham an heir when he was one hundred years old, a son named Isaac.

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<sup>34</sup>Gn 12:1-2 (NRSV).

<sup>35</sup>Anne Graham Lotz. *The Magnificent Obsession: Embracing the God-Filled Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2009), 23.

God methodically moved in younger, new, and fresh people to lead this progression towards establishing the church. First he called Abraham who walked so close with God that he possessed a special relationship with God.

Then God allowed Abraham's son Isaac to surface as the leader of the family. Then after much struggle, family drama, and deceptions, which even Isaac and his wife Rebecca was not immune from participating. Jacob, Isaac's son led what was transforming from a one unit family to the beginning of a huge family.

Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel after struggling and prevailing with God, had twelve sons. Jacob's sons, daughter(s), and grandchildren made a nation, Israel. When we talk about the Christian church we are referring to that which was expanded through God working with Abram, and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. God settled them where he wanted them to reside.

As Israel continued to grow they ran into many internal and external oppositions to test their faith, but God still guided them on the path he had mapped out for them. Because of economic circumstances and the natural desire to survive, Israel migrated to Egypt where they were made slaves and were despised and oppressed for over four hundred years. The Egyptians attempted to destroy them as a people by imploring a tactic of killing off all the male babies. But they were preserved by God to continue to survive as a special people.

One of those Jewish babies that would have been killed if the Egyptians' plan had succeeded was Moses. However, God gave the mother and sister of the young child Moses the wisdom to prevent him from being destroyed by the Egyptians. From Adam to

Christ there is none greater than Moses. He is one of the few characters of Scripture whose course is sketched from his infancy to his death.<sup>36</sup>

Moses survived the death orders of Pharaoh and was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in Pharaoh's home. However, Moses never forgot his Hebrew heritage and would visit his Jewish brethren because he sympathized with their condition and hardships. His concern for them and him intervening on their behalf got him in trouble and caused him to flee Egypt as a fugitive. Eventually God called him back to Egypt after spending forty years in Midian so he could persuade Pharaoh to allow him to lead the Jews out of Egypt.

Moses was assigned the awesome job of convincing Pharaoh, who had no awareness of the Hebrews' God, that their God wanted Pharaoh to allow them to leave and go in the wilderness and sacrifice unto him. God wanted them to assemble like a congregation and hold a feast unto him.

After a series of incidents and several reprimands from God directed toward the Egyptians, Pharaoh finally surrendered to God's demand and permitted Moses to lead the people out of his country.

In the formation of the early church God's plan progressed from Abraham and Sarah and the son, Isaac, to a large family coming out of Egypt. The evolution of the church derived from that family out of Egypt to a nation of people. During the years of Moses' leadership, commandments, covenants, and ceremonies were established of which some are still practiced in the Christian community today.

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<sup>36</sup>Arthur W. Pink, "Gleanings in Exodus: the Early Days of Moses," Arthur W. Pink Archive, <http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Gleani> (accessed March 2011).



Moses after forty years of leadership turned over the reign to his young understudy, Joshua, who was also very instrumental in some of the developmental stage of the church. During Joshua's administration the people were reminded of the covenants and ceremonies. The covenant was kept by a reenactment of the covenant ceremony, at times in a systematic fashion, at other times sporadically. Joshua 24 is an example of this type of thing that happened in such ceremonies.<sup>37</sup>

The people arrived to the Promise-Land and from time to time were greatly influenced by the people already settled there and had their own established gods and forms of worship. Under Joshua, Israel gained a home and were now an established nation.

After Joshua there were a series of leaders called Judges that provided Israel with military and spiritual leadership. During the period after Joshua the judges served to offer spiritual advice and provide military leadership in battle with their enemies. However, each time one of the Judges died the people would return to their old habits and forsake God for other gods. This process would continue like a cycle, as they desired the gods of people in the land where they settled.

By now priests were appointed to serve God and work in the temple offering religious ceremonies to the people. One that was appointed priest and certainly the last of the Judges was Samuel. Samuel operated as a priest, chief judge of Israel, a prophet, and a wise counselor. Samuel's call came from the Lord while he was still a young child and elevated to a role of prominence as a leader in the church before the people rejected him by requesting that God give them a king to rule over them as were the norm of other nations.

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<sup>37</sup>John H. Tullock, *The Old Testament Story* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1992), 79.

Based on God's instruction Samuel anointed Saul of the tribe of Benjamin the first to serve as king of Israel. But Samuel continued to serve as priest and spiritual leader while Saul served as political and military leader. The shared power did not work.

As a result Samuel's support for Saul started eroding very rapidly. Everything unraveled when Saul became impatient while waiting for Samuel to arrive to provide the proper religious ceremonies before the army went to war, which was his duty as the chief religious official. But when Samuel did not arrive within the seven days wait time, Saul took matters into his own hand, attempted to operate the office of the priest and offered the burnt offering himself.

The Lord disappointed by Saul's disobedience sent Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint one of Jesse's sons the next king of Israel. After meeting all of Jesse's older sons and rejecting all of them as being unacceptable to God, Samuel requested to see and meet the youngest one David and anointed him to become the next king of Israel. David was not perfect but tried to please God. He had a lot of issues within his household during the majority of his reign. However, during David's period in power Israel's religious environment appears established. David encouraged worship and engaged in the rituals himself. David respected the established form of church worship and at times operated in the priest's office. When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.<sup>38</sup>

After the death of David his son Solomon became king over Israel. Solomon's tenure as king began at a young age. He immediately relied on God for guidance. God gave him the opportunity to request of him whatever he desired. Solomon showed religious restraint by avoiding the temptation to request worldly riches and instead ask for

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<sup>38</sup>2 Sm 6: 18 (NRSV).

wisdom and knowledge to judge rightly God's people. This young leader demonstrated Christian attributes that should be part of the church.

Israel came out of a disorganized government structure during the period of the Judges, to a period of a religious led governmental structure under Samuel to a period of a Unity Monarchy under Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. These first three kings were all young adults when they reigned and the people had confidence in their abilities. Their young ages were not a liability to their leadership abilities. They actually led Israel through some of her calmest years compared to some of her later kings.

After Solomon's death his son Rehoboam became the king. It was under this leader that the nation was divided into the southern and northern kingdoms. Rehoboam, rather than adhere to the wise counsel of the older men that advised his father when he was king, followed the unwise advice of the younger men and increase the burden on the people. That advice accelerated the division of the nation and the southern kingdom was Judah and the northern kingdom Israel.

During this period of the Divided Monarchy several youthful kings ruled over both nations, including Israel and Judah, two that were under ten years old. There was Joash whose reign as king over Judah began when he was seven years old and Josiah whose reign as king of Israel began when he was eight years old.

The first royal act of Joash under Jehoiada's supervision was to destroy the nearby temple of Baal, the idol whose worship had plunged the nation into a time of violence and vice. After this, there was a great celebration, for the people had suffered under the last three evil sovereigns. Young King Joash, seeing Solomon's temple, now about 150 years old and deteriorating, gave orders to have it repaired, invoking a previously

authorized tax to pay for the work. In his inexperience, though, he failed to establish good lines of responsibility and accountability, and so for years the project floundered.

At age 30, Joash took a renewed interest in the temple, this time soliciting voluntary contributions, which were provided in abundance. He installed a proper organization, and hired professional builders rather than trying to fit the work into the priests' spare time, as in the first attempt. The work was a splendid success. The structure was completely refurbished, and with surplus funds they replaced the aging furnishings and trappings.

Josiah as king instituted major reforms and is credited by most historians with having established or compiled important Jewish scriptures during the Deuteronomic reform that occurred during his rule. These two kings were superb examples of youthful men that God used to sponsor his cause.

Also a part of the church history includes the young adults/youth movement of prophets in the Old Testament, including Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Elisha. It was a young Jeremiah who was called before his birth to be a prophet and convey God's message to the sinful nation. He angered many in the process but nevertheless he preserved through the disdain, criticisms, conspiracies, and imprisonment to relay the message.

Isaiah was young and impressionable in regards to responding to God's calling versus his king at the time. However, God showed himself to Isaiah as well as gave him a vision of his spiritual condition and the people he was to communicate God's message. This vision captivated Isaiah, still young, to respond to the call and volunteered to go.

Elisha was still working with his father assisting him in the family's farming business when Elijah passed through. He left his father and followed Elijah to learn and

transport the message after Elijah's death. God used this young man miraculously to advance his cause.

Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Elisha are just a few examples of young men that were used by God in a time when people expected messages to be brought by the older men that were considered to possess wisdom. These young men, though they needed convincing, were able to make tremendous contributions to the work of ministries even during the unpopular time of their prophecies. Their prophetic voices provided the people with a ministry call to repentance and reconciliation. Likewise, the power that they possessed validated their position as prophets and their relationship with the Lord.

These young kings and prophets' activities and actions show the importance of young adults and youth's contributions to ministries and that they play an essential role in the advancement of God's Kingdom.

As the church transitions from the Old to the New Testament a part of the history is the Intertestamental period. During this period a group was organized called the Maccabean.

This group was formed when an old priest named Mattathias took a stance against the Syrian's pollution and abuse of the temple. Mattathias killed a Jew that volunteered to offer pagan sacrifice in a village. He also killed the government envoy and fled into the wilderness along with his three sons. This act made him a national hero and soon others joined him and a small army was formed. This group eventually defeated the Syrian army and liberated Jerusalem and the victory became a memorial in the Feast of Hanukkah.

Other groups to emerge were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. These were opposing groups formed after the death of Simon, the last son of Mattathias and the end

of the Maccabean era. The Pharisees was a conservative group who just wanted to retain Jewish religious and national liberty and resist Greek culture. The Sadducees on the other hand were willing to surrender some of the Jewish religious qualities and accept some of the Greeks way of life.

In the middle of the political atmosphere were different religious concepts. There was the Gentile idol worship to pagan gods, the influence of occult and even religion based on philosophy. Through it all, the Jewish religion remained. The Jews believed in a personal God who had revealed Himself through miraculous interventions into history, in oral pronounce of divinely authenticated prophets, and inscripturated truth.<sup>39</sup>

As we move the church into the New Testament, a new and misunderstood approach is revealed. In order for the church to be properly developed and given a solid foundation upon which it would stand, God himself, according to our faith, took on the form of human and came down to earth. The supposedly faithful people, the descendants of Abraham and the other patriarchs found it difficult to accept this concept.

Nevertheless, God disclosed his message to the church and his purpose for the church through his son Jesus. Jesus came and taught, performed miracles, and attempted to convince his followers that God had a plan for the church.

At times it appeared that the church's purpose was lost and the plan would fail, but Jesus said, and I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.<sup>40</sup> The church has survived terrible acts of attempted destruction and misinformation intended to contribute to its demise.

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the disciples were ordered to

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<sup>39</sup>Robert G. Gromacki. *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 27.

<sup>40</sup>Mt 16:18 (NRSV).

go to Jerusalem and wait. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.<sup>41</sup> Approximately ten days later the disciples received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the young men were empowered to play a role in the church's numerical expansion.

The church grew in leaps and bounds from that day in the street of Jerusalem and spread throughout the area. But as it grew it was forced to expand out to other areas and extend the opportunity to other people of different background to become a part of it.

Prior to this point the church was limited exclusively to the Jews. But after Peter's visit to Caesarea, the home of Cornelius the Gentiles were accepted as a part of the body of believers.

The early church's headquarters remained in Jerusalem for a while. Eventually because of various reasons the headquarters relocated. One reason was Jerusalem was under constant attack. After her destruction the headquarters was moved to Rome.

This occurred sometime before 67AD, according to historians and the Bible (Acts 28:14).<sup>42</sup> The Catholic religion had extended into Rome at that time, and after the martyr of Peter in 67 AD, the disciples stayed there and continued to evangelize.<sup>43</sup> During this time, there were several movements that affected the expansion of the church, including the Protestant Reformation, established of the Church of England by King Henry VIII, the Puritans, and the Methodist Movement. The Roman Catholic Church in Europe was confronted with challenges to reform its policies and its resistance to these

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<sup>41</sup>Acts 1:8 (NRSV).

<sup>42</sup>Acts 28:14.

<sup>43</sup>M. Piotrowski, "Did the Apostle Peter Died in Rome," John Pacheco, [http://wiki.answer.com/Q/when\\_did\\_the\\_Catholic\\_move\\_to\\_from\\_jerusalem](http://wiki.answer.com/Q/when_did_the_Catholic_move_to_from_jerusalem). (accessed August 6, 2012).

challenges steered a certain sect within the church to mount a protest against the church, establishing the Protestant Reformation movement led by the religious reformer Martin Luther.

Another movement that affected the expansion of the church is the disagreement that King Henry VIII had with the Catholic Church regarding his request to dissolve his marriage to Catherine, daughter of the Spanish king.

Catherine could not produce Henry with a male child so he the marriage annulled so he could marry another woman. The growing distance between Henry and the Catholic Church eventually resulted in Henry forming the Church of England and declaring himself as the head of the church and naming Thomas Cranmer as archbishop of Canterbury. A radical Protestant group that was started in England was called the Puritans. They basically opposed many of the original components of worship that the Church of England had preserved.

Two separate groups emerged within the Puritans religious beliefs, Congregationalist and Baptist. Out of necessity to freely practice their religion they came over to America.

The Methodist movement that came to America was started in Europe by a group of young adults on the campus of Oxford University. The group consisted of outstanding young students that were committed to living a life of spiritual discipline. The young men were called the Holy Club because of their strict lifestyle. Two members of this group were brothers John and Charles Wesley.

After graduation from Oxford and ordination John Wesley came to America hoping to embrace the lifestyle that he and the young men enjoyed in England. Although



he and his brother were raised Anglican he eventually embraced another religion. This event happened on board a ship while coming to America. John Wesley's admiration to a group of Moravian missionaries completely changed him and as a result he was confident that their teachings should be adopted.

This young man, John Wesley, along with his brother Charles evolved from on the campus of Oxford University in England to America and started the Methodist movement that grew rapidly and is still alive today, expanding to other continents. The Methodist movement experienced great success during the industrial revolution and received many members that were displaced and dislocated in their normal setting.

Methodist movement started from a group of young men motivated by a self-discipline lifestyle and has created opportunities for young adults and youths to participate in ministries to attract other young people.

With roots from the established Methodist Church the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. The African Methodist Episcopal Church's founder and first ordained bishop was Richard Allen. Richard Allen was a former slave that bought his own freedom. Richard Allen was a preacher in the Methodist Church who had the ability to draw large crowds at whatever worship service he was scheduled to preach.

Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and some other black friends went to worship at Saint George Methodist Church one Sunday morning. The sexton who directed them to

the gallery, which in 1786 they helped build with their contributions, met them at the door.<sup>44</sup>

While Richard Allen and his friends were kneeling in prayer an officer of the church started pulling them from their knees and notified them that they could not worship there. When the prayer was over, Allen, Jones and the other friends walked out of Saint George Methodist Church.

The group walked out of Saint George with nothing but faith in God. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized by the need to pursue social justice, preserve personal dignity, and exercise personal freedom. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1816 and Allen was elected and consecrated its first bishop. The first church was an old Blacksmith shop located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The first African Methodist Episcopal Church was named Bethel. Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church struggled to survive in the early years because it was harassed and threatened by officials of the Methodist Church. However, with every challenge it faced, God allowed the church to survive because of its vision and a purpose.

From the beginning, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has championed the cause of blacks suffering in America. Richard Allen and his wife Sarah Allen risked their lives attending to Philadelphians during the Yellow Fever epidemic. The church was a leading advocate for blacks to get an education, it is the oldest black controlled organization in the United States, it established the first black institution of higher education in the United States, Wilberforce University in Ohio, and served as stations for the Underground Railroad, helping slaves to escape to freedom.

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<sup>44</sup>Richard Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1960), 7.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church that started with Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, today has churches all over the continental United States. Additionally it also has churches in Africa, Europe, Canada, Bermuda, the Caribbean Islands, and in India comprising of twenty episcopal districts. It now has several colleges, universities, and seminaries.

It is supervised by the General Conference, which meets every four years, the General Board in the interim of the General Conference, and the Council of Bishops. Each episcopal district is assigned a bishop to oversee the works of the district and each district is broken into annual conferences, which meets once a year at a site designated by the Presiding Bishop

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was not the only Black denomination that was organized in America. Other denominations were organized because of the needs to develop a sense of freedom, including the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, started in New York in 1824. Among the leaders of the abolitionist movement were such African Methodist Episcopal Zion members as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Jermain Loguen, and Frederick Douglass.<sup>45</sup>

Another Black denomination organized in America was the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in 1866. These members were released by the Methodist Episcopal Church to form their own denomination. The name was later changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. However, the white Methodist Episcopal Church placed conditions that they were not allowed to participate in political activities.

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<sup>45</sup>Mark Ellingsen. *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Introduction to Church History, Volume 2*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 215.

Although the churches in America were basically born from the churches in Europe, the black churches in America maintained many attributes of its African roots. These were incorporated into its style of worship, which is distinctively different from traditional European worship.

Gayraud S. Wilmore says, Blacks have used Christianity not so much as it was delivered to them by racist white churches, but as its truth was authenticated to them in the experience of suffering and struggling, to reinforce an enculturated religion orientation and to produce an indigenous faith that emphasized dignity, freedom, and human welfare.<sup>46</sup>

The churches that left the Methodist Church were not the only Black churches organized in America. There were other churches as well. Because of this, there remains a controversy as to which black congregation was the first one organized in America. Some believe that the first African American church was at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, which first met somewhere between 1773 and 1775 (probably 1774).<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the churches mentioned, we must also remember that there were churches called Plantation Churches, some visible and some invisible. Sometimes church houses would be provided for blacks to worship, but were controlled by whites. Then there were times when Blacks, especially during slavery, were forbidden from worshipping. In these cases blacks would defiantly worship in bushes and in the fields.

The history of the church always included the input, influence, and inclusion of young adults from the earliest days to today and they have greatly impacted the church.

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<sup>46</sup>Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 25.

<sup>47</sup>Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 57.

## **Conclusion**

The author has used 1 Samuel 16:11-13 as the primary Old Testament scripture and John 6:8-11 as the primary New Testament scripture to speak to this particular age group which is a challenging task.

In these scriptures it is clearly obvious that young adults and youth were essential participants in God's plan the formulation of the church. They were not excluded from leadership positions or decision-making process because of their ages. Many, as were mentioned in this paper were called at young ages to deliver prophetic messages to the people and used as vehicles to save them.

In the theological and historical sections also pointed out the same conclusion. The older adults were not deterrents to progress, but served as teachers, counselors, and mentors in the life of young people called to provide service, spiritual guidance, spiritual and military leadership, and pointers of social, religious, and moral issues affecting the people.

This foundation paper gives this writer hope that his concerns for this project can be researched and plans developed to address the issues with possible a solution applied.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The young adults and youth of Greater Macedonia AME Church have a substantial list of issues and concerns that directly affect their lack of interest in being active participants in the worship service and other church activities. Based on this list of issues and concerns including the attitude of the older, settled members, the young adults and youth find themselves departing from Greater Macedonia AME Church and the traditional style of worship the church continues to follow weekly.

Ministries have to be developed that take into consideration that the traditional path that the church presently follows denies the church membership the opportunity to witness the beauty that comes with diversity in worship, Bible study, and other programs and activities the church offers. New and innovative ministries proposed by this writer for the young adults and youth members of Greater Macedonia AME Church, if implemented, will produce unlimited success by means of retaining young adults and youth and reclaiming others that left previously. Given these statements of fact, the hypothesis of this model is “If more ministries are developed and allowed to be executed separate from the traditional style, more young adults and youth will remain at Greater Macedonia and those that have left will have a reason to return.”

The methodology to be used will be qualitative in disposition. First, the change in the worship experience process must be defined for the purpose of developing the background structure designed to be inclusive of the young adults and youth in the church. The worship experience is the focal point of the spiritual life of the members and it opens the members up to being receptive to God and the path God has chosen for them. The worship experience for the young adults and youth should be more contemporary and less traditional in nature. The worship experience to them is designed to go out and bring more young adults and youth members into the fold.

The second element used is the development of a young adult and youth Bible study separate from the general bible study class held on Tuesday evenings. The issues and concerns of the young adults and youth are different from the other members in the church and require different teaching methods. Also, young adults' and youth's approach to researching scripture and discussing it is far different in that they are not interested in relating it to the past as much as to their current situations and context. A Bible study with only the young adults and youth removes the fears and anxieties that silence them around older members. Bible study should be designed to allow the young adults and youth to open up without fear of repercussions.

The third element is the development of an open forum/summit, in a setting similar to a roundtable discussion, for young adults and youth. The participants include the writer, two group leaders, as well as the young adults and youth members of Greater Macedonia AME Church. The roundtable discussion, initiated by the young adults and youth, allow them the opportunity to open themselves up and express their opinions of

the church while lifting up the problems within the church and the roles they are allowed to play.

The fourth element is allowing the young adults and youth members the opportunity to serve in meaningful and pertinent positions within the organizational structure of Greater Macedonia AME Church. The young adults and youth need to be kept abreast of all business matters and given opportunities to offer their opinions and input into the decisions that are made.

The fifth element is allowing the young adults and youth of the church to implement the use of technology as means of communicating and operating more efficiently in the church. For instance, a project initiated solely to maintain weekly communication with young adult members that are away in college or serving in the military by sending them a weekly devotion from the pastor has grown to other young adults and to the members in general. The message is sent via email and/or text messaging. Greater Macedonia has also computerized all of its records and sends correspondence updating the church's status relevant to their concerns. In addition, one of the young adult members is now publishing a quarterly newsletter.

The sixth element shall be the evaluation criterion. This will be accomplished by the implementation of a pre-survey test, which will be followed by the implementation of a post-survey test given at the completion of a six-week evaluation period. This period shall be measured from inception of the contemporary worship experience and the young adults and youth Bible study, which will continue indefinitely.



### **Worship Implementation**

The context team will be implementing a model for worship for young adults and youth that have felt like outcasts in worship conducted in the traditional setting. The model for worship is designed to be a comfortable worship experience for young adults and youth that desire a more contemporary style of worship be integrated into the traditional style of worship where everyone can feel content within the same setting. The worship experience is rich in hymnals, rituals, and custom practices. Given these facts, the church is lacking in substance of worship, which offers a unique challenge to the implementation process for such a model. For example, the congregation's current style of worship works well for the older members and appears to satisfy their expectation of the comfort level reached during the set time. Given this and other factors, the worship experience is designed to reach only the older group, and with that in mind it is achieving its goal.

The first step is to identify what the young adults and youth want to see incorporated into the worship service that would make them feel a part of the Sunday experience. For instance the worship service seems more conducive to the past struggles of the members that allow them to cope with life and help them move forward with the thought that better days will come by and by. This attitude seems to indicate that it aligns with the thought process that though life deals them trials and tribulations, there is hope in the end. The hymns that are sung support that position as well. The young adults and youth respect that part of the older members' theology, but feel that realistic songs would be more appropriately suited for the struggles facing them today and opportunities they can grasp hold on.

The second step is to allow the young adults and youth the opportunity to decide their style of worship, including the type of music, choosing the worship participants, and designing the order of service. This is done because the young adults and youth do not relate well to the traditional hymns and the traditional order of service currently in place. They believe that they have the right to express themselves in worship with uplifting and lively songs that give them a sense connection to the God they serve. Greater Macedonia has gone to great length to dedicate the entire fourth Sunday worship service to the young adults and youth of the church. As often as possible a young adult speaker is brought in to deliver the message and the messages are prepared to address the youth and the issues that surface in their lives. The fact that noted consideration is given in the area of worship is reflected in the attendance. It is also noted that the musician and choir director play a vital role in the fact that they have to respect the young adults and youth selections of songs and work with them in preparing them for the Fourth Sunday.

The third step is to allow different types of ministries to be integrated into the Fourth Sunday worship service. The young adults and youth are excited about dramatization type activities such as praise dancing in worship. The praise dance ministry is made part of the worship service every Sunday except the First Sunday. The praise dance ministry of Greater Macedonia must be under the guidance and direction of a younger member of the congregation who can relate to the dancers. The context team believes that they will become very popular in the area and have the opportunity to be in demand to perform their ministry at other churches beyond denominational boundaries.

As the worship experience grows, it will not become complacent and content, but seek ways to build on the accomplishments and improvements that come because of the active roles the young adults and youth are having in the worship service. Greater Macedonia will find out what other things they would like to see included in the worship experience and be willing to hear with an open mind.

### **Young Adults and Youth Bible Study**

The third step is to organize a young adult and youth bible study. The context team recognizes that there is only one general bible study and the young adults and youth did not generally attend. Those that attended did so because they came with the older adults. However, it was noted that they were disinterested in the discussion and sat in the back of the church disconnected from the class. For instance, the context team believes that if the older members were not a part of this setting the young adults and youth would be more excited to participate in bible study. Also, the young adult and youth bible study would allow them the freedom to ask question and to suggest topics of interest to discuss without fearing what the older members would think or say.

### **Young Adults and Youth Forum**

The context team proposes that the pastor organize a forum/roundtable exclusive to the young adults and youth of the church. The young adults and youth should be extended the opportunity to freely and openly express their frustrations, verbalize their problems and concerns, present their ideas, learn about the traditions and culture of the church, and share how they can assist the church utilizing the gifts and talents.

This forum/roundtable discussion would serve to develop a deeper sense of understanding of where the young adults and youth are spiritually in Greater Macedonia and also establish in them a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to serve the church. The writer and only a selected few adults (chosen by the young adults and youth) should be in attendance. The writer will also use the setting to explain the history and culture of the Greater Macedonia AME Church.

The writer should also explain to them the importance of hymns and the affect it played in the life of the older adults as they lived through and struggled with social, economic, and moral issues.

### **A Part of the Organizational Structure**

The context team will recommend that a model for sharing of power be implemented to allow the young adults and youth members a voice in the planning of Greater Macedonia's ministries and a role in the decision making process of the church. Because the boards have no young adults and youth representation the church fails to understand their concerns. As a result, they are constantly overlooked and/or pushed to the side. There are a number of ministries for young adults and youth listed in the Book of Discipline of the AMEC. However, many of those ministries appear on paper to be active but are inactive or nonexistent.

The first step is to identify those areas in the Greater Macedonia where young adults and youth ministries are not active and if active make certain that they are relevant to their cause. It is also extremely important to make the church aware of these gaps or opportunities in ministry and that the church's support is essential to motivating this group to preserve interest in the overall church as a whole.

The Steward Board is the highest office under the pastor in the AME Church, selected by the pastor to serve for one year. However, members of this board almost overwhelmingly are reappointed annually for many years, sometimes until they die or illness prevents their continued service. Traditionally, older experienced members serve on this board and develop a sense of power. The young adults and youth can serve on the Junior Steward and observe, sit back and watch and wait until their time comes to serve as a Senior Steward. The Junior Steward Board has to be activated, given instruction, and allowed to observe the Senior Stewards, give input, and be visible in the various meetings. They must also be given opportunities to serve on committees such as the financial and evangelistic committees. The logic is that the young adults and youth will feel that they are contributing to Greater Macedonia because they bring fresh ideas to the table.

### **Utilizing Technologies/Social Media**

The context team recommends the use of available technologies to communicate with the young adults and youths at Greater Macedonia. It is noted that many of the older members fear the use of computers and other available technological devices. This keeps the church behind the time and unable to advance in current matters. The younger members notice that all the records and reports are done manually. This represents serious neglect of available gifts and talents within the congregation. It is recommended that we use the gifts that the young adults and youth possess in our context. The records are to be computerized utilizing the talents of our young adults and youth with the guidance of those older members that have computer skills.

The young adults and youth should receive messages from the pastor and the church secretaries via emails and texts and the young adults and youth members should be included in the pastor's weekly devotional messages that go out to the older members.

### **Need's Assessment Survey**

At the end of the initial worship period and the forum/roundtable discussion, participants will be administered a post-survey test, which shall be assessed by the context team. The post-survey test is an efficient process to obtain a precise, comprehensive means of tabulating the results of the sampled population. This information can be used to address the critical needs of the older members to make every effort to improve the opportunity for participation from the young adults and youth.

The collection of this data will serve to understand the current and future needs of the young adults and youth as well as understanding of missed opportunities to grow by the older members of Greater Macedonia AME Church. It will also measure how well the current ministries that are available are meeting the needs of every member. The data will also allow the context team to look at how the new/improved ministries are changing the atmosphere of Greater Macedonia AME Church through new worship experience.

The data drawn from the Pre and Post Test Surveys can be used to strengthen the young adults and youth religious experiences in every aspect of their church involvement. It can build a closer bond between the members under forty years old and the members over forty years old.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

The development of new ministries for young adults and youth are done more effectively when a launch team is used. A launch team for this ministry model is a select group of people that have distinctive gifts for developing and starting new and creative ministries for young adults and youth in a congregation. This group brings a wealth of knowledge and a high level of expertise to the ministry field allowing for increased ministry success.

To ensure the success of this ministry model, a launch team was formed from amongst the writer's associates to be responsible for planning and implementing this ministry model. In forming this team it was essential to include persons on the team that had an interest in the development of new ministries, or at least resurrect ministries in place that have been dormant. Identifying and including persons with an understanding in developing and implementing ministries for young adults and youth will support the detection of prospective challenges. This will help the ministry partakers continue to endure through the struggles and inconveniences associated with the implementation of a startup project, particularly with reference to new ministries in a setting that is heavily influenced by tradition.

Implementing new ministries for young adults and youth members can be a very tenuous project to plan. The mere thought of creating ministries for a group that are often

overlooked can create among the others things, attitudes of suspicion and filled with resentment and the possibility of a conspiracy to discourage the entire project.

With this understanding, the launch team is extremely important in communicating the need for the ministry. The launch team was considered necessary, persons that understand how the young adults and youth feel because of the situation, empathize with their dilemma, and have access to traditional and contemporary styles of worship. Also, it was important that each member of the launch team be in agreement to continue with this project throughout the entire required implementation period. Their commitment and continuity would provide the young adults and youth consistency and knowledge as the new ministry evolves.

### **Launch Team**

The writer understood that in order for the project to succeed the parameters had to be defined and precise coordination between the writer and the launch team is required. There are four committed persons that have agreed to participate in this project and the writer has full confidence in their abilities to perform exceptionally well in this project. Each one of them brought a slightly different but unique perspective and has demonstrated a passion for ministries for young adults and youth.

Reverend Jarrett Britton Washington, a pastor in the AME Church is an extremely effective motivator with the young adults and youth in the Charleston, South Carolina area. He holds a Bachelor Degree in Political Science from the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, a Master Degree in Christian Education, and a Master of Divinity from Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to entering the ministry he served as the President of the Young People Division of the



Edisto District, the South Carolina Annual Conference, and the Seventh Episcopal District, comprising the entire state of South Carolina with over ten thousand members. His messages inspire young adults and youth across denominational boundaries. His ministry incorporates both traditional and contemporary worship styles. A prolific writer with one publication to his credit and reaches thousands each day through his daily devotions posted on his Internet site.

Brother Clinton McPherson is a Licentiate in the AME Church. He also serves as the president of Young Adults Ministry (YAM) of the Edisto District, a ministry with about one thousand members. He is the president of the Sons of Allen, a men's ministry in his local church. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication and a Bachelor of Art Degree in Theater from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina. As the president of the Young Adults Ministry of the district he coordinates activities for the young adults and makes recommendations on their behalf to the thirty churches in the Edisto District.

Sister Tyeka Grant is a young adult member of Greater Macedonia AME Church where she serves as the first and current local President of the Young Adult Ministry. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina, a Master Degree in Human Resource Development from Webster University, and a Master Degree in Professional Education from Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Sister Grant is the mother of two daughters and the guardian of two nieces. She works as an Associate Elementary Teacher at Sanders-Clyde Elementary School, President of the Eastside Neighborhood Council, Sanders-Clyde Creative Arts Parent Teacher Associate, Parent Representative for

Superintendent Roundtable, Charleston Young Professional, Charleston Promise Neighborhood Community Engagement Council, Charleston Charter School of Math and Science Board of Director, Concern Citizens of the Peninsula Low Country Advisory Board, Community in Schools Roundtable Committee, Trident Technical College (Palmer Campus) Annual Eastside Day Committee, and the Martin Luther King Business and Professional Partners with YWCA.

Sister Anissa Simms is a young adult member of Greater Macedonia AME Church and participates within the Young Adults Ministry and the Young People Department. She attended Miller- Motte Technical School in North Charleston, South Carolina where she majored in Medical Assisting. She works at the Charleston Pre-School as a lead Teacher with young children and youth. She offers a calm level-headedness towards the young adults and youth ministry that directly assist in maintaining their presence.

### **The Process**

Thursday May 3, 2012, at 6:00 PM the scheduled meeting was held in the Conference Room at Greater Macedonia AME Church. Recognizing that this was going to be an exciting journey, the starting point for the meeting was determined, were attended by the launch team members, several youth advisors from the church, and the writer. The meeting began with a synopsis of the proposed young adults and youth ministries for Greater Macedonia AME Church and a thorough discussion of the steps involve for implementation.

The launch team assured the youth advisors of the necessity for this innovative approach to ministry, and the launch team was confident that the project would improve

the overall state of the church's ministries and assure its existence in the future. The process involved in this project was explained in detail and the desired outcome was established. The planned outline included meeting with the young adults and youth in a forum/roundtable setting and have them explain to the launch team and writer what are the issues and concerns they have about the present involvement of the young adults and youth in ministries and what they expect from this project. The launch team and writer would assure the young adults and youth of what their ultimate expectations were for this project.

Saturday May 26, 2012, 9:00 AM the forum/roundtable discussion was held at Greater Macedonia AME Church Fellowship Hall. A Continental Breakfast was served before the discussion began. The writer expressed to the young adults and youth the importance of openness at the forum/roundtable in order to achieve some degree of success with this project. They were reminded that this was a great opportunity for them to promote the ideas they have and wish to implement. The roundtable discussion revealed the frustrations the young adults and youth held inside because of the unchanging atmosphere of the church in respecting their opinions and allowing to be involved.

The state of the worship service was at the top of the list of concerns. The young adults and youth felt disconnected from Sunday morning services because they were not given opportunities to participate in the worship experience but were expected to receive, accept, and support it and not complain. They addressed the fact that they would prefer some contemporary songs be included in the service to offset the boredom that comes with singing old hymns that they did not understand. The young adults and youth

suggestions for changes to the worship services were communicated to the congregation and it was decided that greater emphasis would be placed on the young adults and youth engagement in worship service. The Fourth Sundays, which were traditionally turned over to the young, adults and youth was only a token gesture of including them in the service to appease them. They were already presiding over the Fourth Sunday Services but would be given more latitude to offer input over the entire order of service, and select the songs they preferred for worship rather than continuing to comply by the ones selected by the older adult members. The message was also important to the young adults and youth because they oftentimes did not feel the any connection that addresses their struggles. That being lifted up, it was recommended that in the future sermons would be preached on the Fourth Sundays that focus on young adults and youth and available young adult ministers would be used as guest speakers.

They also expressed concerns that they were not able to relate to the Bible Study classes as it were currently held having all the age groups combine into the same class. Out of this discussion, it was determined that the young adults and youth would have their own Bible study that would be held every other week. The writer assured them that they would also determine the topics that they desire to have for discussion in their Bible study. The young adults and young gave an interesting list of topics and it was implemented.

The team entered discussion of church leadership positions encamped by the older members. It was strongly suggested that the young adult and youth be provided the opportunities to serve in leadership positions in the church, which were traditionally reserved for the older members. The launch team members had the opportunity in the

past to serve in leadership positions as officers and they expressed how rewarding it was to know that the older members placed so much trust in them and their abilities to make the proper decisions when the need arise. The launch team connected with the young adults and youth in this matter.

The writer assured the team that young adults' and youth representations would be included on every board and auxiliary and their opinions would be considered. Actions would be taken as a part of a restructure of Greater Macedonia AME Church Young Adults and Youth Ministries. The team felt confident that the writer would keep the commitment to promote young adults and youth to key positions in the organizational structure of the church. It was determined that the young adults and youth would be invited to all church meeting as participants and would be seated next to the chairperson in the Official Board Meeting and other meetings pertaining to ministries.

Another subject for discussion centered on the needs for defining activities planned exclusively for the young adults and youth that includes but not held entirely at the church setting. The launch team suggested that a Youth and Young Adult Council be established and they be allowed to develop a 2013 Calendar and Events beginning on January 1, 2013 and ending on December 31, 2013. The schedule should be incorporated in the church's calendar. It was further recommended that a budget be developed to fund the events.

The categories are to include recreational activities, worship periods, Bible Study time, Evangelistic Witnessing, Mission Projects, choir's rehearsal date, Praise Dance Teams rehearsals, and Discipleship Study training. This suggestion was received with high expectations.

The final discussion was on measuring the effectiveness of the new young adults and youth ministries at Greater Macedonia AME Church. The team shared with the youth advisors that the pre and post surveys would be administered. The goals were clearly stated in terms of the questions and how the outcomes would determine the direction of the ministries as they advanced. The measurable period would be a six-week period followed by a follow up session critiquing the surveys and reviewing the data compiled.

### **Collection of Data**

Saturday, July 7, 2012, the launch team came out back to Greater Macedonia AME Church, meeting in the Fellowship Hall. The team interacted with the young adults and youth of Greater Macedonia during the first few moments. They shared a simple repast of orange juice and pastries. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday September 11, 2012.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

The journey through the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary has generated remarkable advancement in the ministry of the writer. This project has helped this writer recognize that at crucial points in his life when he did not understand what was transpiring that God was imposing God's will to form the writer's purpose to engage the call to ministry. The writer has come to the conclusion upon reviewing his life that his burning desire to pursue theological education was destined and designed for him to elevate his call beyond the pastoral ministry.

The process undertaken in pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry degree began with the writer laboring emotionally as he wrote his Spiritual Autobiography. As the writer uncovered critical moments of his life as he wrote, he discovered that commonality existed between his desires as a youth and young adult to be acknowledged and allowed to be involved in ministries parallel with his passion for creating opportunities for the overlooked group to also be acknowledged and awarded opportunities for complete involvement in ministries.

Growing up, the writer remembers the void that remained after attending church service and the length he would go to avoid having to return the next Sunday. The writer would pretend to be ill and remain in bed until the family left for church. After they left he would get up and go to the neighborhood basketball court to do what he loved the

most at that time, playing basketball. The writer would remain at the neighborhood courts and continue to play basketball until he believed church service was over. He would return home prior to the family arriving from church and declare himself recovered from his illness. When he attended church the worship service felt meaningless and unfulfilling. Yet, there existed this constant belief that there was more to church for the young adults and youth beyond annual recitals at Christmas and Easter Services and he maintained a determination to discover what that more included.

The writer remembers growing up observing how strong willed the adult members in the church were, as they demanded to exert control over operation of the church. He also remembers the methods they would resort to displaying when they were disgruntled not having their way. He would wonder if the older members that were so focus on pursuing their personal agendas could take time out to entertain the possibility of involving the young adults and youth and accept their suggestions in regard to ministries.

Prior to the writer beginning this doctoral voyage he was already promoting ministries that were inclusive of the young adults and youth in the churches where he served as pastor. So naturally, when the writer began the journey and pondered the direction he should travel in this endeavor, it quickly became obvious to him the direction in which his passion for ministry pointed. He fondly recalled how he related to the young adults and youth and encouraged them to communicate freely their ideas and desires to contribute in their churches and communities.

As the writer reminiscence into the past relative to ministries for young adults and youth brought him back into contact with several events in his life after his discharge



from the United States Army in 1979 and his reintroduction to the church he grew up in, the community he was raised, and an introduction to the new adventure he acquired with his employment with the United States Customs Service. While employed with the United States Customs Service he frequently represented the organization at area schools on all levels during Career Day. He enjoyed those opportunities because he believed that in the future it would make a difference in the young people's life when they acquired positions that offered them opportunities to contribute.

The writer would also traveled to colleges in several states, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to recruit college students interested in seeking employment with the United States Customs Service. He believed that young adult students hired out of college could also return the good deeds in the future by contributing to their churches and communities.

The writer organized a Customs Explorer Unit for the United States Customs Service in Charleston, South Carolina. The writer spent his own leisure time organizing the explorer unit and helping them receive recognition among explorers in other law enforcement organizations. The Explorer Unit members were engaged in all the organization's activities and trainings. He has proudly kept up with many of those individuals over the years and is aware of some those former explorers' accomplishments. One of his former explorers is an attorney in the Solicitor's office and another is a detective in the local police department.

Once the writer entered into the ministry he was actively engaged in the Church school at his local church. He was an effective teacher of the young adult's class. The writer also taught Bible study, which consisted of mostly the young adults members with

a few older adults in attendance. As the writer's ministry evolved to the pastoral field the opportunity to develop and shape young adults and youth ministries expanded based on his prior involvement with the young adults and the passion he held for this group. As a pastor he had more opportunities to observe what was offered to the young adults and youth in terms of ministries and the foresight to listen intently to their suggestions and make recommendations. As a pastor, the writer made full use of his position to make certain ministries for young adults and youth were include in the church's annual budget. That is that the planning stage of the budget process included ensuring that adequate monetary allocations were a budgetary item placed in the annual budget.

The writer has been successful in developing young adults and youth ministries in the churches he has pastored. The success occurred because the writer gave special attention to that issue and made the older members aware of that being a high prior in his administration. The young adults and youth in those churches the writer served responded to this issue positively as it propelled them into recognition of belonging.

When the writer arrived at the church that he currently serves as pastor he recognized that there was a huge absence of young adults and youth ministries at Greater Macedonia AME Church. The lack of ministries directly affected the poor attendance of the young adults and youth to church services and other activities. Also, those that still remained active attendees were not involved in any of the congregation's activities.

The writer was concerned to a small degree about this lack of attendance and participation in the context but he did not consider it to be an urgent situation. The reason he did not consider it to be urgent was because he has dealt with such situations before and had seen it resolved on each occasion. The writer believed strongly that this trend

would be reversed with attention given to the problem. The writer's greater concern in consideration for his passion for young adults and youth ministries was that there would be a research and development study conducted. Then, standards be established and this could be applied as a ministry model to address the issue of young adults and youth ministries in a uniformed manner. So with that concern, the writer accepted the challenge to raise the issue in order to address it directly and use the findings to arrive at a conclusion.

The writer gives accolades to his mentors Doctors Robert Walker and Kenneth Cummings for their guidance and directions in helping the writer apply his spiritual gifts to developing his passion into a ministry model. They were attentive to the writer's journey as he opened up himself to them about his past and how that past has directed him to undertake this project. There were times when the writer seemed clueless and severely off course. During those times the writer would express to the mentors his frustrations and fears of prospective failure in the completion of this project. Each time the writer went through those times the mentors would guide him back on course by reminding writer of his passion that was uncovered in his Spiritual Autobiography of moving the writer to develop new and more innovated ministries for young adults and youth.

The moments of frustration and fear of failing occurrences was often at times during this project. But the mentors would not allow the writer to quit but continued to reach out to writer through those struggles.

The writer strongly believes that divine purpose was involved in directing him to this project. Even during those times when the work paused it did not stop very long

because of the divine purpose to complete the project. Many times during paused moments the writer was guided back to revisit his passion in his Spiritual Autobiography and synergy. Just recently the writer came upon two young men that were youth when the writer pastored the church they attend. After the usual meet and greet exchange that accompany not seeing them for a few years, the young men, now young adults, expressed to writer how much they enjoyed when he was their pastor. As they walked away the young men told the writer that when the writer was their pastor attending church was fun. That statement was very encouraging to the writer and inspires him to continue to pursue the passion of young adults and youth ministries.

After much struggles with defining this project, difficulties in locating quality information on the subject, wrestling within himself, and seeking God's guidance and purpose for directing him in undertaking this mission, the writer is certain of the revelation to engage the project. The writer's certainty is solid even in lieu of the fact that there have been many things that could have obstructed the continuation of the project and foil its completion. The model the writer envisioned would be an adaptable model that could easily be implemented in other settings experiencing the same problem difficulties.

The blessing and expectation from the young adults and youth ministries is that it would enable other churches to be able to use this writer's passion for ministries for young adults and youth. The writer's project would also be a blessing for many churches suffering from their young adults and youth disinterest in church and their overwhelming departure from attending their particular congregations. This ministry project will also assist other churches whose desire is to maintain the young adults and youth that

currently remains with the church and reclaim those young adults and youth that have left.

The writer was careful to inform everyone that would be directly and indirectly affected by the ministry project its objectives and goals. The writer was also passionate in communicating the extreme importance to this project to the future survival of Greater Macedonia AME Church. But somehow the reason for the project either was poorly explained or simply rejected by a small minority. Some of the people that were informed did not fully comprehend the purpose of developing this type of ministry. Those people believed that it was being repetitious and reasoned that provisions for young adults and youth ministries were already available. Other preferred to allocate the resources for developing the young adults and youth ministries towards other areas of concerns that they considered more urgent. Then there were a small group that accepted the plan for this ministry model and were willing to overly compensate the ministry to accommodate the young adults and youth.

Some members believed that the emphasis on young adults and youth ministries are too intense and costly and would exceed the return in the investment in the short term.

It was clearly pointed out that the young adults and youth do not contribute to the church financially and that should be considered to providing funds. In addition, it was noted that the monthly expense involved in operating the church consumes a high percentage of the income making it unwise to take on any additional projects that requires additional revenue to operate.

The group aforementioned that are willing to overly compensate the young adults and youth ministries felt like the church was required to accept every suggestion that the

young adults and youth presented to the congregation to support their ministries. The writer noticed that some of the ideas would completely change the dynamics of the church as a religious entity in terms of its purpose. That particular group was willing to accept all of the recommendations from the young adults and youth rather they were practical or not. The writer reminded the group that at the end of the day, though the congregation should embrace changes to enhance the young adults and youth ministries, the church must still remain a congregation that adheres to church polities.

The writer believes that in implementing this project, if he was starting over he would be more inclusive in selecting the people involved. He would solicit more input from older members, involve them more in the pre and post-test, and get them more excited about the process and the prospect of resurrecting renewed interest and excitement among the younger people in the church. The writer would educate the members that though some resource would be involved it would be minimal. The writer would also educate the members that the cost should not be the contributing factor because it will be more expensive to the church if these ministries are not given attention immediately.

The writer would make it very clear prior to implementation of the project that although these young adults and youth ministries should be on the cutting edge of ministries today that there will still be boundaries established. As this project defines those areas that the young adults and youth thinks will enhance their interest in ministries and provide them with the platform they request to apply their beliefs that they must still remain a church. The writer would make certain from the outset the older members do not feel the threat of alienation because of changes. The writer would involve the older

members more in the initial planning stage, keep them informed as the project progressed, and prepare them more gradually for the implementation of the project.

As a result of this project, much success has been accomplished. There is an increase in the attendance of the young adults and youth at Greater Macedonia AME Church. There is also greater participation of the same group in ministries and more interest with excitement about the prospect of being contributors to the success of the project. The young adults and youth are beginning to speak up and involve themselves in the different meetings and events of the church, and most importantly, see themselves as equal partners in Greater Macedonia and feel a sense of responsibility to its survival.

Because of the boldness of the writer in developing this project, growth and the possibility of replicating this ministry project in other churches not limited to denominational boundaries has emerged. The writer is receiving interest from other pastors with the same concerns for new and innovative ministries for young adults and youth in they particular context. The writer is also receiving questions as how to sell it so all members could recognize that a problem does exist in that area. The writer answers that this project affords young adults and youth the opportunity to express themselves concerning how they feel about religion and pull in others their age group that otherwise has in interest in church.

Replicating this model can happen by congregations, ministry groups within the churches, young adults and youth leaders, ministers, and others who are called and led to serve the young adults and youth in and out of the church in meaningful ways.

In the research, development, and implication of this model the writer recognized the importance of utilizing the social media as a crucial method of communicating the

prophetic message to the younger generation. In the process of reaching the young adults and youth the concept of prophetic preaching and praxis becomes more relevant to both groups when it is communicated through the social media. Today's young adults and youth spend countless hours on Facebook, Blogging, Twittering, and texting. They also share information with their many friends through this process. This project, combined with prophetic preaching and praxis is designed to bring awareness to the needs for more ministries to young adults and youth and will ensure the survival of the future of established religion. Through this project, the young adults and youth will hear the voices of the prophets, but in their arena of social media, speaking to them today. This project also will empower the preachers to develop strategies to combine young adults and youth ministries with the social media and prophetic preaching and praxis in their various contexts.

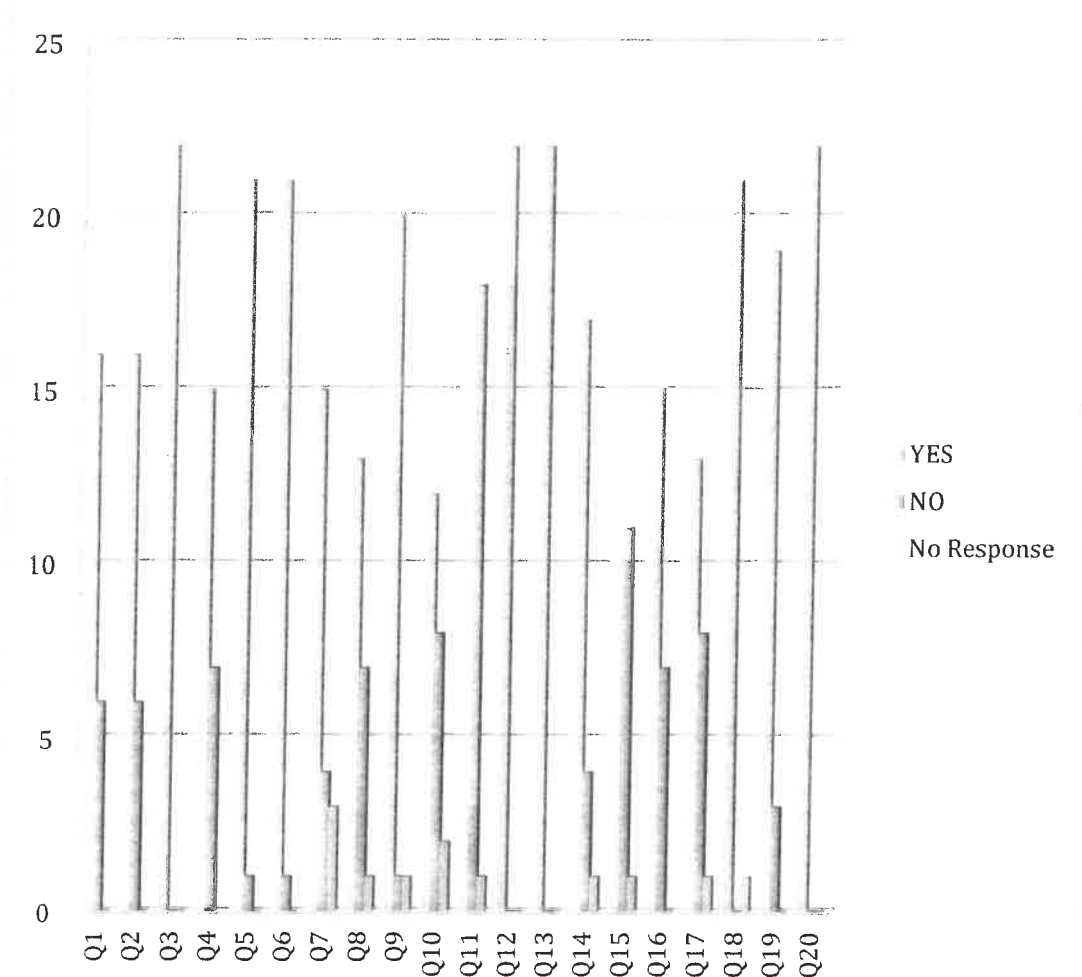


**APPENDIX A**  
**RESEARCH PROJECT PRE AND POST-TEST RESULTS**

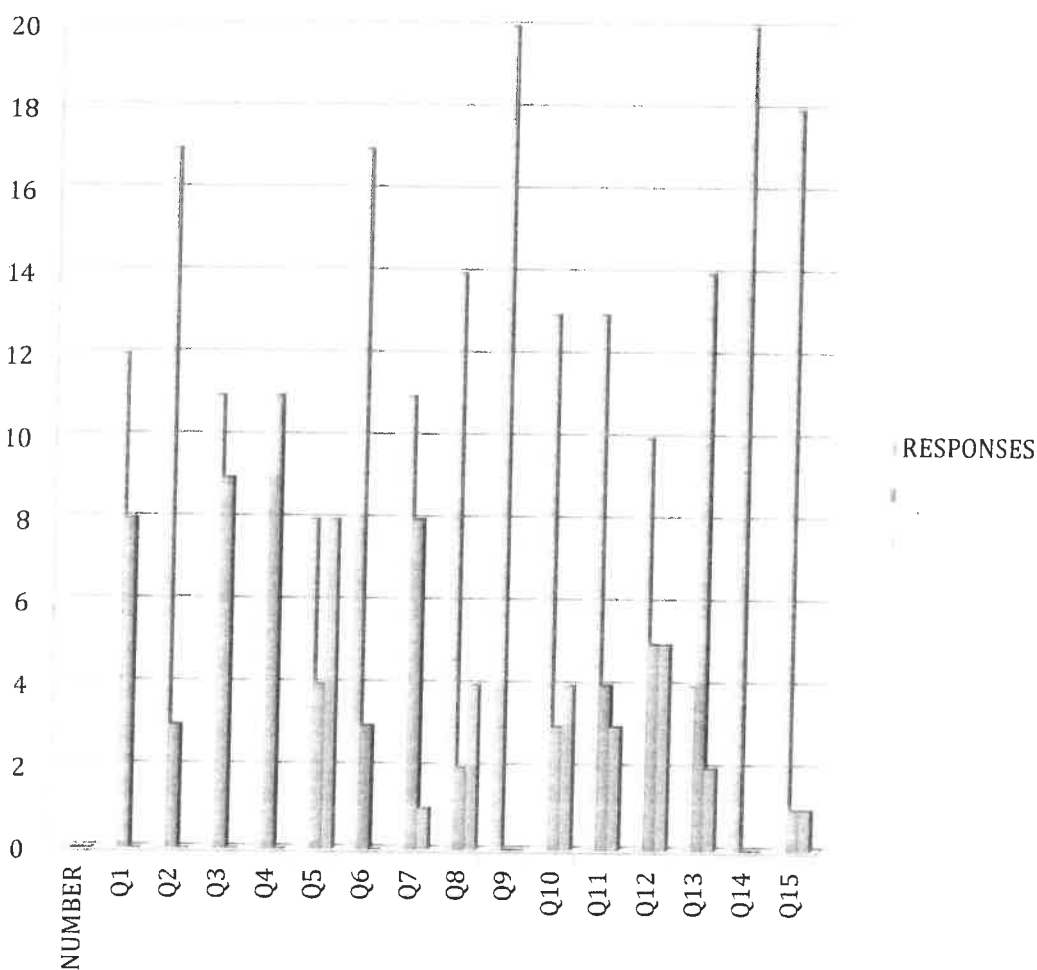
# Greater Macedonia AME Church

## Young Adults and Youth Ministry

### Part 1 (Pretest results)



**Greater Macedonia AME Church**  
**Young Adults and Youth Ministry**  
**Part 2 (Post-test results)**



Questions for Pretest

1. Are you a female?
2. Are you in the age group of 39 and under?
3. Are you a member of Greater Macedonia AME Church?
4. Are you a young adult/youth member of the church?
5. Do you attend church regularly?
6. Are you excited about your church?
7. Is there excitement among the young adults and youth in this church?
8. Is Church School and Bible Study interesting to you?
9. Are there young adults/youth in leadership position in your church?
10. Are there specific young adults/youth events in your church other than Vacation Bible School and Christmas programs?
11. Are you a member of the Young Adult Ministry (YAM)?
12. Do the young adults/youth participate during worship service?
13. Would you encourage others to come to your church and or youth activities?
14. Do you have any suggestions that would enhance the youth adult/youth ministry?
15. Do you think your suggestions would be well received by the older members?
16. Do you feel that you relate well with the older members?
17. Do you possess any creative talents that can be used in young adult/youth ministry?
18. Would you like to see more seminars, workshops, and or training for the young adults/youth?
19. Would you be willing to assist in motivating the young adults/youth to become more active?
20. Do you think your pastor gives adequate recognition to the importance of young adult/youth to the church?

### **Questions for Post-test**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. Are you a female?
2. Are you in the age group of 39 and under?
3. Are you aware that a young adult/youth round table was held at Greater Macedonia?
4. Did you attend the round table?
5. If you attended did you think it was productive?
6. Are you aware of the young adult/youth bible study?
7. If so, have you attended the bible study?
8. Do you think the young adults/youth bible study is effective?
9. Are you aware that the Fourth Sunday is designated as youth Sunday?
10. Does the young adult have any input in Fourth Sunday service for the youth?
11. Would you like to participate in a young adult/youth council?
12. Will you be attending the church's retreat in 2013?
13. Do you have any suggestions for the upcoming retreat?
14. Do you enjoy the Pastor's sermon on Fourth Sundays?
15. Does the sermon address issues relevant to the young adults/youth in attendance

**APPENDIX B**  
**RESEARCH PROJECT CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**APPENDIX B**  
**RESEARCH PROJECT YOUNG ADULTS**  
**AND**  
**YOUTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS**  
**Young Adults and Youth Calendar of Events**

**January 2013**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Young Adults and Youth in Emancipation Parade 11 am
- 9<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal at 6 pm
- 15<sup>th</sup> Two Young Adult Representatives at Professional Breakfast at College of Charleston at 7am
- 15<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 16<sup>th</sup> Young Adult Ministry attends Trident Technical College Orientation at 10:30 am to 1pm.
- 16<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ rehearsal at 7:00 pm
- 17<sup>th</sup> Young Adults Evangelistic Witnessing Training at 4 pm to 6 pm
- 19<sup>th</sup> Young Brothers on the Move Rehearsal at 11am
- 20<sup>th</sup> Young People Department (YPD) Hot Dog Sale after Worship service
- 21<sup>st</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. Day for Young Adults and Youth Community Service
- 24<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal at 5 pm
- 27<sup>th</sup> YPD/Parents Meeting after Worship service
- 29<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm

**February 2013**

- 4<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm
- 9<sup>th</sup> Young Adults "Be My Valentine" Social
- 12<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible 7 pm
- 13<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ rehearsal at 7 pm
- 16<sup>th</sup> Saturday School (Discipleship Training) 9 am - 12 noon
- 17<sup>th</sup> Black History Program
- 20<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir rehearsal 5 pm
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Young Brothers on the Move rehearsal 5 pm
- 26<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm

### March 2013

- 2<sup>nd</sup> YAM "Let's Get Connected" Roundtable Discussion 10 am - noon.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Sister for Christ rehearsal at 6 pm
- 9<sup>th</sup> Young Adults mission project at Nursing Home
- 12<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm.
- 13<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm
- 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> YPD Retreat in Fort Mills, SC
- 21<sup>st</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Young Adults and Youth males bowling night with the Sons of Allen Organization
- 26<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm

### April 2013

- 6<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Discipleship Training
- 9<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 11<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm
- 13<sup>th</sup> College Recruitment/Job Fair 10 am – Noon
- 18<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 27<sup>th</sup> Young Adults/Youth Service Day 10 am - Noon

### May 2013

- 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and youth trip to Short Stay Resort
- 7<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 9<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm
- 15<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm
- 18<sup>th</sup> Mothers/Daughters Brunch 10 am – noon.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm
- 25<sup>th</sup> Youth Talent Program and Praise Dance Celebration

### June 2013

- 1<sup>st</sup> Father/Son Social 10 am - noon
- 4<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm
- 6<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm
- 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Day/Graduates Award Day



13<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Vacation Bible School

### **July 2013**

TBA YAM partners with City of Charleston and College of Charleston to participate in the Annual Spoleto Festival

11<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 13<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Mission Project to local Nursing home  
 18<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 25<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm  
 27<sup>th</sup> Youth Cook-out and Fun Day

### **August 2013**

2<sup>nd</sup> First Friday One Day YAM's Revival 6:30 pm  
 8<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 10<sup>th</sup> Back to School Giveaway 10 am  
 15<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm  
 31<sup>st</sup> Young Adults and Youth mission service

### **September 2013**

3<sup>rd</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study  
 5<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 11<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 14<sup>th</sup> Child Obesity Month Awareness sponsored by YAM and YPD 10 am – noon  
 15<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm  
 19<sup>th</sup> Youth Witness Night at the South Carolina Annual Conference 7 pm  
 21<sup>st</sup> Youth's Gullah Tour  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Youth Sing out  
 24<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study  
 TBA YAM and YPD attends the Battle of the Bands  
 TBA YAM and YPD local trip to Moja Festival

### **October 2013**

8<sup>th</sup> Young Adult and Youth Bible Study 7 pm  
 TBA Fire Awareness Month  
 TBA Bully in School Awareness  
 10<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 12<sup>th</sup> Youth Evangelism Witness  
 16<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm  
 24<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm  
 31<sup>st</sup> Youth Halloween Event

### **November 2013**

5<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm  
 7<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 9<sup>th</sup> YAM and Youth visit to Avery Institute (African American Museum)  
 13<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 15<sup>th</sup> Youth mission in community  
 19<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm  
 23<sup>rd</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm

### **December 2013**

3<sup>rd</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study 7 pm  
 5<sup>th</sup> Sisters for Christ Rehearsal 6 pm  
 7<sup>th</sup> Youth Christmas Dinner  
 11<sup>th</sup> Brothers for Christ Rehearsal 7 pm  
 13<sup>th</sup> YAM Christmas Social  
 17<sup>th</sup> Young Adults and Youth Bible Study and Christmas Dinner 7 pm  
 19<sup>th</sup> Youth Choir Rehearsal 5 pm  
 21<sup>st</sup> Discipleship Training

**APPENDIX C**  
**YOUNG ADULTS AND YOUTH SERMON**

**APPENDIX C**  
**YOUNG ADULTS AND YOUTH SERMON**

**Pericope**

**1 Timothy 4:11 - 16**

**Main Text**

1 Timothy 4:11 – 16, “These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers. (NRSV).”

**Subject: It's Your Time**

Behavioral Purpose: To get the Young Adults and Youth of Greater Macedonia AME Church to understand that they do not have to wait to be full participants in ministries there. It is the right time for them to step forward and get involved in the church, and in some cases, lead the efforts.

Introduction: The Apostle Paul is believed to be the author of this letter. It is written to Timothy, a faithful follower and spiritual son of Paul. The main themes of First Timothy include: Sound Doctrine, Public Worship, Church Leadership, Caring Church, and Personal discipline.<sup>1</sup> Paul writes to counsel this younger colleague and delegate regarding his ministry in Ephesus. It encourages Timothy to maintain faithfulness and truth amid surrounding errors from false teachers. Paul also reminds Timothy that his young age does not prevent him from offering effective leadership in ministry.

Move 1: *It's your time to overcome the age issue.* Far too often the young adults and youth members in the church are locked out of the planning stage, decision making process, and the implementation phase because it is believed that they are too young to have a voice in the operational side of the church. Most of us grew up in the church believing that we had to wait until our time arrived. Until our time arrived normally meant that it would happen but only when the older members died out.

The sad truth of the matter is that both the older and younger members in the church hold this traditional belief. It is difficult to challenge tradition especially if it means unseating someone's power base. Even the perception of a young adult being over aggressive brings wrath upon him or her by the older members. If positions are thrust upon a younger adult member, that member feels a sense of guilt for ousting someone that has held a position for a long time.

The older members refer to young adults and youth as being too green or still wet behind the ears. On the other hand, many of the young adults avoid seeking position of

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<sup>1</sup>Philip W. Comfort, Dan Lins, *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, Illinois: Tyndale House Publisher, Inc., 2001), 928.

leadership in the church because it would upset the same members that saw them grow up from childhood to adulthood in the church.

But if you have invested the time and resource to prepare yourself for service then do not hold yourself hostage for fear of angering someone older but less qualified. God and the church deserve the best possible person regardless of age to step forward and engage in ministry.

It's your time now to overcome the issue of age and go forward in service. The Apostle Paul told Timothy not to allow anyone to despise his youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

Like Timothy, I admonish you today not to continue to remain in the background because you are a young person in the church. You have much to offer to us. We need you stand up and share those things you have learned. It's your time to forget about your young age and inexperience and trust God to present opportunities for you to teach.

Move 2: *It's your time to recognize your calling.* Do not allow the comments of others and unsolicited advice to be the deciding factor that guides you in your approach towards or retreat away from ministry. But allow the Holy Spirit to work out in you that which you have been designated to do. God has provided the gift in you to perform ministry. This is not a strange theology to mention that each of you possess spiritual gifts to engage and even lead ministry even at a young age. The Bible contains many stories of young adults and youth that were equipped with the adequate gifts to deliver God's message to the people and perform ministries and those individuals did it with purpose, passion, and power. I stand to tell you that you can do it also and at the same level or maybe even at a higher level.

Paul realized how intimidating all of this could be to Timothy, a younger man attempting to lead a congregation that no doubt had members older than him. It would be a mistake on our part also if we neglect to understand the intimidations that our young adults and youth in the church must face also as they seek to work in the church. But the most important lesson we can learn ourselves and teach others is that ultimately it is more expedient and advisable to exercise the gift within us from God than to neglect or disregard the gift. Paul tells Timothy in this letter to not neglect the gift that is in him. The gift he had within did not come from his parents, other family members or friends. Paul said it was given to Timothy through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.

Like Timothy, you too need not to neglect the gift in you. Let the gift in you surface so others can see that the hand of God is on you. It's your time to recognize your calling. There are many individuals in your age group that would be inspired by you as you share your gift with them. Your gift just may pull someone out of a situation that appear hopeless. There is a void among young adults and youth for peers that utilize their gifts. But, like Timothy, it's your time to recognize your calling to Christian witnessing, Christian service, and Christian ministry.

Move 3: *It's your time to apply what you were taught.* Timothy had traveled around with Paul to many places. He, no doubt, was an attentive understudy who had learned a vast amount from Paul, his mentor. Now that Paul was unable to be with him because of circumstances beyond both Paul and Timothy's control, Paul reminds him through this letter to apply those things that he was taught. Put these things into practice devote yourself to them so that all may see your progress.

It is important to remember those things you were taught in your Bible study, in Church School, and in regular church. It's your time to apply what you were taught. Some of you went off to college and have learned new teaching methods that would be beneficial to the Christian Education Department of the church. You have invested much of your time, energy, and resources to refine your profession. It's your time to apply your knowledge in education. Some of you went to other schools and acquired specialist skills in areas such as computers and other technologies. It's your time to apply what you have learned in computer and technologies.

We are depending on you to share with us the diverse knowledge you have gained while you were away. Now that you have returned, it's your time. I encourage you to be comfortable with your gift and seek to assist the leadership of the church in raising the efforts to presenting new and innovative ministries to attract the young adults and youth to the church. It's your time now to apply everything you have learned to raise the profession level in this church.

Move 4: *It's your time to bring souls to Christ.* Paul told Timothy to keep a close watch on his private life and his public ministry to the church. His conduct in both areas must be above reproach. If he stayed true to what is right, it would benefit him and everyone else.<sup>2</sup> If Timothy followed Paul's instructions he would be successful in ministry. However, let me set the record straight, real success comes when one is drawing souls to Christ. Paul reminded Timothy that in the process of saving himself, he would also be successful in saving others.

Likewise, the young adults and youth must also pay attention to the same instructions Paul gives to Timothy in order to achieve the ultimate goal on your Christian

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 947.



journey. Who can be better to reach the young adults and youth that are not in the church than you, the young adults and youth that have been called to serve the present age?

Celebration: Today, I declare to you, the young adults and youth, that as you listen to the news and observe all the activities all around you, you must admit that it is time for action. I come today to encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities offered unto you at this time. In the midst of all the negative publicity you hear daily you have an opening to do something positive for your peers. Do not let this opportunity pass by you.

Be willing to offer your innovative ideas, and ready to implement those ideas. Do not shy away because you are young, but move forward because God is on your side. God wants you to step forward and make a difference to your peers that are looking for a reason to come in out of the street. It's your time to step up to the plate. It's your time to tell that young man and woman that God is able to turn their lives around. It's your time to proclaim to your generation that they do not have to accept defeat because victory belongs to them. It's your time because you have been faithful.

You've been faithful, you've been true. And you've done all that you can do. And for your faithfulness, it's your time. You applauded for the rest. Now it's your time to be blessed. And for your faithfulness, it's your time. You've waited for so long. But you held on, and you were strong. And for your faithfulness, it's your time.

You encouraged everyone else, when you needed it for yourself. And for your faithfulness, it's your time.

Because you hung in there when times got hard, and when it seemed like nobody cared. You kept right on working, you kept right on doing good things, and for your faithfulness, and for your faithfulness, it's your time. He told me to tell you, it's your time.

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